THE SOCIOLOGY OF RACE RELATIONS IN BRITAIN

ETHNIC REDEFINITION

EXTERNAL CONSTRAINTS

INTERNAL PREFERENCES

CONTRA VALUE SYSTEMS

REACTIVE MILITANCY

DEFENSIVE CONFRONTATION

ETHNOCENTRISM

REACTIVE ETHNICITY

BLACK UNITY PROCESS

"THEY WOULDN'T USE THEM LONG WORDS IF THEY HAD TO CLEAN UP AFTERWARDS"

Also: Richard Wright and marxism
Education of an underclass in W. Germany
Malawi's 'Bandastan'
Wright on Negro writing – Notes on Nicaragua

CONTRIBUTIONS

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RACE & CLASS

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Cheerleaders and ombudsmen: the sociology of race relations in Britain

There is a dangerous sociology abroad – a sociology of race relations, that is – and dangerous to the black cause that it seeks to espouse. It emanates from the new set-up of the SSRC (Social Science Research Council) ethnic unit at Aston (University) under John Rex. It purports to ameliorate the condition of the black minorities, and the black young in particular, by appeals to enlightened capitalism. And, in that, it could be allowed to pass the blacks by, except that at a time of concerted and massive attack on black people by the state, to hold the centre ground against academics who abstract and distort black experience (however unwittingly) becomes vitally important.

To understand the new sociology, one must understand the old and locate them both in the dialectical struggles between increasing state racism and growing black resistance.

In the beginning, in the colonial period, blacks were people you studied in their native habitat – so as to inform colonial rule and authenticate an ideology of racial superiority. But as the colonies achieved 'independence' and the colonial administrators came home, the focus of interest in the former colonial subjects shifted to the dock areas of Great Britain, where the first black settlements had become established. The first systematic study of the black natives in the British context was

undertaken by Kenneth Little, an anthropologist at Edinburgh University. He went to Cardiff's dockland in the 1940s, as a physical anthropologist, to measure the heads of black children. But when he saw the condition of black people there and experienced what he termed 'a slice of the reality about which my African friends in Cambridge had told me', he ditched his preconceived notions and models and addressed himself to the social issues instead. And in the analysis that followed he came up with a colour-class hypothesis which took in the historical legacy of colonialism to explain the prevailing ideas of black inferiority – which, had his successors but followed, might have led to a significant corpus of work on race and class.[1]

Their research, however, was triggered off by a different phenomenon. Post-war Britain, desperate to build up its industries and desperate for labour, had turned to its colonies and ex-colonies for the extra manpower it needed. (The Nationality Act of 1948, with an eye to British labour needs, granted UK citizenship to colonial and ex-colonial citizens.) Black labour from the West Indies and the Asian sub-continent was encouraged to come to Britain. London Transport opened a recruiting office in Trinidad; the Tory Minister of Health (Enoch Powell) looked to the Caribbean for nurses to staff his understaffed hospitals; textile factories, foundries, etc., looked to India and Pakistan for their workers. The fillip to immigration gave a boost to social science, in this subject area anyway. And so, in the mid 1950s, two more social scientists set out to discover whether the new settlers were fitting into British society and, if not, why. Where their journey took them was, of course, to the old dock areas. Anthony Richmond, a student of Little's, looked at Liverpool's West Indians,[2] Michael Banton, under Little's supervision, studied Stepney.[3] They were both concerned to examine the degree of 'assimilation' and of 'adjustment' in these communities. To what extent were the blacks fitting in? Were they successfully becoming British? Banton was concerned that Asians showed less likelihood of being assimilated; the West Indians, but for their colour, were British anyway. The emphasis of these studies put the responsibility for change entirely on the blacks. That British society and its people might, in fact, be blocking such assimilation was explained away in terms such as 'in-group out-group' and 'strangeness', borrowed from the race relations literature of the USA – almost as though white hostility was an inevitable and understandable part of human nature.

Within two years – a year before the riots of Nottingham and Notting Hill (1958) – Sydney Collins was addressing himself to the race 'problem'.* In a comparative study of the internal organisation of Negro, Moslem and Chinese port communities, he wrote about 'allaying

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*It is as well to remember that the publication of these studies post-dated their writing by at least a year.

the fears' of white society. He judged the 'emergent' associations of immigrant groups as very often 'maladjusted', lacking leadership, 'unstable'. He felt that immigrants should not 'contrive to observe folkways alien to British society'.[4]

If the ports represented one area of the 'black presence', the overseas students represented another. The knowledge that colonial students were the ambassadors for Britain back home and represented a possible ruling class in the newly-independent states made them a focus of political concern, and of interest to the researcher. The Political and Economic Planning (PEP) report of 1955 pointed out that it was on colonial students that 'the responsibilities of leadership in the swiftly developing countries . . . must fall to a large extent'.[5] And A.T. Carey, one year later, examined this 'élite among colonial society' because 'British official policy recognises the importance of training colonials in the professional and technical fields'.[6]

But as immigration continued (demands for some kind of control were now beginning), a more disciplined and academic body of research began to emerge. The first such work was *White and Coloured*, in which Banton attempted a sociology of race relations* – departing from psychological explanations of individual behaviour to the study of the structures and norms governing behaviour.[7] Though white people appeared well-disposed to blacks, ran his argument, they preferred to keep a 'social distance' because of the pressure of group norms. Strangers had different norms and one was wary of them, but in reacting to blacks one was reacting to the 'archetypal stranger'. At around the same time Sheila Patterson was also trying to find a sociological model into which to fit her field-work** in Brixton.[8] But she was not yet as advanced as Banton and rejected the relevance of colour to the whole issue. She preferred to explain her findings within a neutral 'host-immigrant' framework: the 'dark strangers' would fit in one day, like the Poles, the Jews and the Italians before them.

The studies of this period were concerned with describing how the immigrants lived, what their customs were and how they were adapting to British society, and reflected what Sivanandan has termed the 'laissez-faire' period of immigration (to Britain). Britain needed all the workers it could get – 'you couldn't get an armless, legless man never mind an able-bodied one', said a Midlands foundry superintendent – and the market forces of supply and demand would regulate their numbers. No provision was made for their social needs. They were just units of labour, ready-made at that, and had to fight it out with the

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*Banton's career and writing is of importance in that it spanned two decades of race sociology, and, unlike most of the later work, he attempted to develop a coherent theory of the subject.
**Carried out 1955-8, but not published until 1963.

white working class for the dwindling stock of houses, schools, welfare services – and that in the decaying inner-city areas where such stocks were at their lowest. Business and government, while deriving (economic) profit from 'immigrant' labour, left it to the workers, both black and white, to carry its social cost. In the process the blacks became defined as the cause of social decay in the inner-city areas and not its symptom.[9]

But nowhere in the literature of the period was there a hint of such an analysis. So that when the race riots broke out in Nottingham and Notting Hill in 1958 and Kelso Cochrane was killed, the nation was momentarily transfixed in a posture of moral outrage and sought ready scapegoats in a handful of 'hooligans' – finding its finest expression in the judgement of Lord Justice Salmon. 'You are a minute and insignificant section of the population', he declared, passing sentence on nine white youths, 'who brought shame on the district in which you lived and have filled the whole nation with horror, indignation and disgust . . .'

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The academics were, by nature, slow to respond. But the IRR, which since its inception in the Royal Institute of International Affairs in 1952 (becoming an independent body in 1958) had concerned itself with 'race relations' abroad ('it' was not something that happened here), was quick to grasp the nettle. It had, after all, been set up for that purpose and, as an independent research body, it was in a position to assess the situation objectively, and advise the policy-makers. Immediately after the riots it commissioned James Wickenden to look at the problem.[10] And soon afterwards it asked a number of writers, under the aegis of Professor J.A.G. Griffith, to make a factual assessment of the national race relations scene.[11]

Underlying both these studies there was still a sense of moral outrage and a disbelief that 'it' could have happened here. 'British people', wrote Judith Henderson in the Griffith report, 'take a pride in their national traditions of freedom and justice . . . It is therefore distressing for us to read of disturbances . . . where white and coloured people have come to blows.' Racialism was un-Christian, un-British and unreasoning. It was the Institute's task, therefore, to investigate the relations between the races dispassionately, in a scientific manner, educate the public with facts and bring reason to bear on emotion. It was possible in Britain (unlike South Africa) 'to argue one's case with the government and the government would show reason – so long as the case was reasonable'.[12]

It was this combination of Christian morality and a juridicial concept of the reasonable man that was to characterise the work of the IRR under its first and founding director, Philip Mason. And it was the IRR

which was, from 1958 for at least a decade, to influence all race relations thinking in Britain. This research was less concerned with the collection of field-work data and the construction of models than with bringing 'facts' to bear on public debate, so as to influence and advise government in particular. For the time being the 'academisation' of race relations had come to a halt. Events were moving too fast for that. Research had to be oriented to action; it had to influence policy.

But by 1962 a Tory government had sufficiently overcome its horror of racialism to introduce a racist immigration act. The end of the post-war boom and the beginnings of recession – hard economic facts – dictated that Britain should gear the entry of black labour to economic needs and weigh the social cost of immigration against its economic benefits.

Thus government policy combined (racial) immorality and reason. What should the Institute do? The Institute's reaction was not to bring censure to bear on the government's 'immorality', but to seek yet more facts with which to influence the reasonable man (and perhaps the reasonable party – the Labour Party). Hence, Mason commissioned the Survey of Race Relations (SRR), a 'Myrdal-type study for Britain', in the belief that:

> the situation in Britain was fluid – in that neither the native community nor the immigrants had established any settled pattern of behaviour . . . and it seemed that a review of the situation coupled with the encouragement of some work to fill the immediate gaps, would focus attention and help to avoid mistakes.[13]

In Jim Rose, and especially in his assistant, Nicholas Deakin, whom Mason brought to the Institute to direct the Survey, he had men whose interests were also directed to influencing public opinion in general and the Labour Party in particular.

The 1962 Act, though, had changed the contours of race relations research. It was no longer enough to publish findings that would influence white attitudes and public policy when the government itself seemed to think that black people were 'the problem'. Hence, if the IRR and, more specifically, the SRR, was to look at race relations objectively, it had to side-step the government and view the matter in a 'social problem' framework. The blacks may not be a problem, but their presence did throw up problems; that was not to say that racial prejudice and discrimination were not also problems. And it was still possible to speak to policy, if only to Labour Party policy.

But in the 1965 White Paper Labour capitulated to the racist ideology of the day, restricting black immigration yet further and justifying it in terms of better race relations. 'Without integration', intoned Labour spokesman Roy Hattersley, 'limitation is inexcusable; without limitation, integration is impossible'. Even if it appeared that Labour

was doing the wrong thing, there was little doubt that they were doing it for the right reason. And the IRR, quick to appreciate Labour's legerdemain – in holding on to reason without letting go of morality – found a way out of its own impasse. 'We are determined', said Philip Mason in the *Guardian* of 23 December 1965, 'to cut down sharply the number of fresh entries until this mouthful has been digested.' And that 'digestion', of course, was to be facilitated by the National Committee for Commonwealth Immigrants and its voluntary liaison committees, on the one hand, and the Race Relations Board and its local conciliation committees, on the other. Hence the Institute, through the Survey, moved away from looking at the 'negative aspects' of immigration to look at the 'positive aspects' of integration. And in Roy Jenkins' definition of integration – 'not as a flattening process of assimilation but as equal opportunity accompanied by cultural diversity in an atmosphere of mutual tolerance' (May 1966) – Deakin et al found a doctrine which, with differing emphases but always the same core, was to inform the Institute's research for the next few years. They developed a school of thinking (as opposed to a school of thought) which held that if racialism, seen as the cultural intolerance underlying and giving rise to racial discrimination, was educated away, equal opportunity would begin to flourish. This could be achieved not least through the anti-discriminatory legislation which their guru Jenkins had promised. They approached race relations, then, in terms of cultural relations (like the earlier assimilationists) and not in terms of power relations, least of all state power. (It was an approach that was to find its echo in the Bristol ethnic school a decade later.)

Consequently, the growth of black consciousness and the rise of black militancy passed the IRR and its Survey by. Of course, those who prided themselves on being the 'young Turks' of the Institute had involved themselves in the lobbying crusade of CARD (Campaign Against Racial Discrimination), only to break away when it threatened to become more politically aggressive.* But by and large the Institute continued to churn out cultural studies explaining customs, beliefs, behaviour, values and attitudes of immigrants to white society: Sikhs in Southall, Pakistanis in Bradford, Chinese in London, West Africans in London, Cypriots in Britain, etc. They were occasionally interspersed with more factual (neutral) studies such as *Immigrants and Employment in East London*, *Spring Grove: the education of immigrants*, *Indian Workers' Associations*, and *Immigrants in Industry*.

Journalists, teachers, aspiring academics – all were recruited to the race industry of the Institute and its Survey. And in 1967 an attempt was even made to bring in 'proper' academics, such as Banton and Rex, to a thirty-years race research project which Mason had envisaged. But

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*CARD itself broke up over the question in 1967.[14]

neither the plethora of literature nor the massing of the cognoscenti seemed to improve race relations or influence government policy one iota. And when, in 1968, a Labour government outdid the Tories and brought in an Immigration Act from which all pretence at morality had fled,* the Institute's answer was to rush its seven-year survey into print.[15]

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When *Colour and Citizenship* was published in 1969, the book and its authors were greeted not only by public but even some government acclaim. It was a massive tome, devoted almost exclusively to the empirical. Where it was not, it concerned itself with recommendations for better race relations. It examined the backgrounds of the main immigrant groups and the 'push and pull' factors that had brought them to Britain. Three chapters were devoted to an examination of their numbers from every conceivable angle, including a statistical projection about the future size of the coloured population of England and Wales, thereby giving validity to Labour/Tory orthodoxy that numbers were the problem and that numbers and good race relations were organically linked. The book also examined immigrants' access to housing, employment and education, and attempted to examine local and national policy responses to black people. It also came up with its own attitudes survey, which said that the majority of the British people were not racially prejudiced. Finally, it made seventy-eight recommendations, all bar one aimed at government, employers, trade unions, churches, etc.

The 'philosophy' and purpose of *Colour and Citizenship* were expressed very clearly by Deakin in the book's revised version:

> Any proposals for the amelioration of relationships between minorities and majority – and this book is intended principally as a constructive contribution towards policy making in this field – must be justified in purely practical terms . . . [and] have an application to the real problems of the adjustment process . . . [16]

And the adjustment process entailed the elimination of racial prejudice and therefore racial discrimination. For they saw discrimination itself as a matter of prejudice – prejudiced employers, prejudiced unions, prejudiced workers, etc. – not as a matter of exploitation. Race relations, in other words, was a problem, like unemployment, delinquency, crime or housing, which could be resolved 'without compromising either the cultural integrity of our society or the values and

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*The 'morality' that the Act held out was quite simply that British citizens ceased to be British citizens when they were black British citizens in East Africa.

principles which animate it'.[17] The social problem framework into which the Institute's researchers had retreated in response to government's racialist policies had here found its fullest expression.

Other aspects of the Institute's work, such as its library and information service and its monthly *Race Today*, were more immune to government racism. And their concerns were to be voiced by Robin Jenkins, a researcher in the Institute's International Race Studies Programme, in a paper delivered at the British Sociological Association on 'The Production of Knowledge in the Institute of Race Relations'.[18] In it Jenkins pointed out that the approach of *Colour and Citizenship* was not scientific but ideological, and that the knowledge contained in it made the power élite more powerful and the powerless more impotent. He warned blacks not to submit themselves to the scrutiny of white researchers who, in effect, acted as spies for the government. They should, he said, be told to 'fuck off'.

Jenkins' critique may have emanated more from an academic's search for truth than from a commitment to the black struggle as such, but it opened up a major debate as to the whole direction of race relations research and provided a catalyst in the struggle to transform the Institute itself. That struggle had grown out of the opposition to the race relations philosophy that *Colour and Citizenship* epitomised – which in turn was a reflection of the struggle outside. Black people were being subjected to institutionalised racism at every turn – at the ports of entry, with the police, in the courts, in the schools, in housing and employment. Market researchers (not academics) had found a 20 per cent unemployment rate among north London's black youngsters.[19] A black teacher had revealed that in certain schools for the educationally subnormal, nearly all the children were black.[20] The Mangrove Restaurant (a meeting place for black activists) was constantly raided, black youth clubs were subject to attack from the police, black leaders were being rail-roaded to jail on conspiracy charges. *Race Today*, the Institute's magazine, was beginning to open its pages to 'the voices of the victims': a black prisoner smuggled out a letter about prison conditions, black trials were followed in detail, black power was examined – by a black power advocate.

But the Survey team, continuing as the Joint Unit for Minority and Policy Research (JUMPR), was as impervious to black reality as it was to state racism. A Tory government which proposed drastic immigration restrictions that put all black Commonwealth citizens on a par with aliens, converting them into rightless *gastarbeiter*, made no impression on the research outlook. (Lobbying against legislation was done, but in isolation from the 'serious' long-term research work.) JUMPR refused to confront the issue of what policy-oriented researchers could do when the policy-makers they were addressing had become part of the problem. Some of their studies reflected the preoccupations of the 1950s,

for example, 'the adjustment study', funded by the Social Science Research Council, to examine 'the process of adjustment through which coloured immigrants and their children are passing, in order to establish indices of their relative permanence (or transience)'. Then there was the fact-finding Survey-type research, such as the school-leavers study, a joint project with the Inner London Education Authority, 'to discover the comparative job prospects of black and white school-leavers'. And finally there was the 'new'-style research which seemed to give token recognition to black disadvantage, but under the rubric of urban sociology, subsuming it to the general social disadvantage of the inner city. It was no more than the 'enlightened' section of government was already doing in its Urban Programme and Community Development projects.

But the books that had poured out of IRR for over a decade – somewhere around one-hundred volumes in all and something like 85 per cent of the literature on race in Britain – had slowed down to a trickle. Three of them, though, reflected the ongoing transformation of the IRR itself. Not fortuitously they were the work of foreign scholars: Heineman's *The Politics of the Powerless* (an analysis of CARD), Katznelson's *Black Men White Cities* (a political analysis of government policy) and Castles and Kosack's *Immigrant Workers and Class Structure in Western Europe*.[21]

The dispute in the IRR, which finally came to a head in 1972 and involved politicians, the media, community groups, practitioners and academics, had gone far beyond Jenkins' critique. Where the fundamental problem lay was now the issue. It was not black people who should be examined, but white society; it was not a question of educating blacks and whites for integration, but of fighting institutional racism; it was not race relations that was the field for study, but racism.

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That was the message of the struggle that transformed the IRR and the academics who had supported the staff. Race relations research could never be the same again. Apart from anything else the early 1970s had seen the emergence of blacks writing on their own realities and questioning the values and methods that white sociologists were using on them. Already in 1969 Sivanandan had written a critique of liberalism in the Institute's *Newsletter*, which showed up the contradictions of the liberal position and especially its commitment to peaceful change in the face of issues which were no longer capable of resolution within the existing structure of society.[22] By 1972 he argued, in *Race Today*, that government immigration and race relations policy was meant 'to reconcile...the economics of discrimination with the sociology of dislocation, while hanging on to the ethos of liberal democracy'. The

Race Relations Acts pointed 'to the rising social cost of discrimination in relation to the fall in the surplus value derived from second-class production factors that cannot be disposed of in times of recession'.[23] Gus John, a Grenadian, was to attack the white academics.

> Departments to study the immigrants spring up like mushrooms, financed by trusts and foundations. Yet the only relationship most of them have with black groups is that of visitors to the zoo. Their findings are never meant to enable the deprived to take action.[24]

He was, no doubt, influenced in this view by the fight he had to put up with the Runnymede Trust to get out the unexpurgated version of his report on Handsworth, which the Trust itself had commissioned.[25] This report, with later works such as Dilip Hiro's *Black British White British* (1971) was to tell white academics quite firmly that their role as interpreter was over.[26] The black power phase had belatedly begun to find its way into the literature: the policy-oriented researchers had to give up their academic pretensions, the academics had to move out of the hustle and bustle of the market place and find their own niches. JUMPR's researchers had found alternative homes even before the IRR debacle was resolved. And the Community Relations Commission (CRC) Reference Division stepped in to take on the main burden of policy-oriented research (it belonged there after all). The industrial unit of the Runnymede Trust (an organisation initiated by the Institute in the late 1960s to provide more short-term and immediate research) was to take on much of JUMPR's role, especially as mediator with employers and unions. All that was left of the Institute was *Race Today*, which was soon hived off as an independent political journal, the library and *Race*, the Institute's academic journal. *Race* was the last part of the IRR to change direction. But in 1975 it became *Race & Class*, reflecting in its title commitment to an analysis directed to social change. *New Community*, published by the CRC (under the editorship of Sheila Patterson), took over exactly where *Race* had stopped – taking the issues, authors and the 'commitment to non-commitment' that *Race & Class* had rejected. Occasionally an academic reared his head, for example Danny Lawrence with *Black Migrants: White Natives*,[27] but, steeped in the *Colour and Citizenship* assumptions and traditions, soon sank without trace. The Survey's own legacy was apparently limitless: some ten years after being commissioned, Dennis Brooks limped home with his study of London Transport.[28] Only Alan James' *Sikh Children in Britain* (1975), in which he explained 'them' to 'us', was a premonition of the ethnic school to come.[29]

The two outstanding books of this time to be written by whites, and in a non-academic style (*Racism and Black Resistance*[30] and *A Portrait of English Racism*[31]), spoke to the issues that the IRR struggle had thrown up – little wonder since both authors, Robert Moore and Ann

Dummett, had experienced the Institute's transformation and both aimed to expose the racism in white society. Robert Moore and Tina Wallace's *Slamming the Door*[32] (not as powerful a book as Moore's first paperback) did, in examining the impact of immigration control from the black point of view, indicate how researchers could put their knowledge at the disposal of those fighting racism by exposing white racist institutions.

But even as the policy-oriented researchers were beginning to disperse, the academics had begun to gather. At its 1969 annual conference the British Sociological Association had already discussed 'The Sociology of Race and Racialism' with the intention of integrating 'race relations into general sociological theory'. Clearly the academics were dissatisfied with the then dominant IRR-type 'social problem' orientation in race relations – it did not provide an adequate basis for sociological theory. Questions were raised as to the use of the term 'race relations' to describe an interpersonal process which precluded questions of class, market access and power. Where race relations had not been defined as a 'social problem' it had been analysed purely as a cultural issue, and contained concepts such as 'cultural strangeness'. But although the strangeness wore off, racialism increased, and this concept became more and more threadbare. The implicit assumption of a consensus on common values as a pre-requisite to social integration (for example in *Colour and Citizenship* and in Banton) came under fire from two separate 'schools'. There were those who preferred a theory of cultural pluralism in opposition to the consensus view of British society and there were those, like John Rex, who were opposed to both the 'ethnocentric' and the 'cultural pluralist' view of society. Rex argued that:

> any attempt to explain the structure and dynamics of race-relations situations in terms of the strangeness of the newcomer, of culture shock, or in terms of immigrant and host, is inadequate . . . We would insist that without the power or stratification element there would be no race-relations problem.[33]

But in the event the pluralist school won out and, funded by the Social Science Research Council (SSRC), took up habitation in Bristol University under Banton's wing in 1971. (Rex's day was yet to come.) All academic research for the next few years was to emanate from this body, the SSRC Unit on Ethnic Relations at Bristol.

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Meanwhile, the state, having ended all primary settler immigration with the 1971 Act, got down to the serious business of bringing the blacks into line, particularly the second-generation blacks who threatened to disrupt the body politic. The embourgeoisement schemes of 1968-76

had dealt with the recalcitrant section of the 'first generation' – by funnelling vast amounts of money into once-autonomous black organisations such as youth clubs, nurseries, supplementary schools, hostels for the homeless, self-help groups, workshops for learning skills and advice centres – via Urban Aid, Community Development Programmes, CRCs, etc. But the blacks who had been born here – and that meant almost half the black population – were less susceptible to the blandishments of the state. The West Indian youth refused to do the shit work their parents had done and were in open rebellion against the state; the Asian youth had taken upon themselves the defence of their people against the fascists, the police and the judiciary. United the young blacks would pose a problem for the state that it would find difficult to contain. The state was anxious – and it showed in the White Paper on racial discrimination in September 1975. Listen, wrote Sivanandan, in an evocative passage in *Race, Class and the State*,

Listen to the voice, the anxieties of the state:

'the character of the coloured population resident in this country has changed dramatically over the decade. Ten years ago, less than a quarter of the coloured population had been born here: more than three out of every four coloured persons then were immigrants to this country . . . About two out of every five of the coloured people in this country now were born here and the time is not far off when the majority of the coloured population will be British born.'[34]

And 'this leaven of energy and resourcefulness', continued the White Paper, 'should not be allowed to lie unused or be deflected into negative protest on account of arbitrary and unfair discriminatory practices.' It was a concern that the House of Commons Select Committee was to pick up in its report shortly afterwards: 'the alienation of some of the young blacks cannot be ignored and action must be taken before relations deteriorate further and create irreconcilable division'.[35]

The militancy of black workers too was a cause for the state's concern. Right through the previous decade in strike after strike – at Woolf's, Courtauld's, Mansfield's, Imperial Typewriters' – a predominantly Asian work-force, deprived of union support, had entered into (independent) struggles, which by their very nature were political. Now, in the Grunwick strike of 1976-7, at a time when the Labour government was beginning to dismantle institutional racism, on the one hand (because big capital need it no longer), and to incorporate the working class into a social contract with government, on the other, a black work-force threatened to disrupt both strategies. Unless the Grunwick workers were unionised, they could not be brought into the social contract. Hence there was little surprise – for the analysts in *Race & Class* anyway – either in the trade union espousal of the Grunwick

cause or in the presence of cabinet ministers and MPs on the picket line.[36] (When had the black cause ever found such exalted support from trade unionists and ministers of government alike?)

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It is in the light of these developments, both in state racism and in black resistance, that the work of the Unit in Ethnic Relations and its acolytes must be assessed. In essence what they set out to study was not the relations between races as defined by their colour but the relations between ethnic groups as defined by their culture. British society was not to be viewed as some sort of homogenous cultural monolith (as their predecessors were wont to do) but as a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic society. And the business of the ethnic school was to show how these several ethnicities served to ameliorate, mediate, buffer the injustices of white society. In the process of that struggle it was even possible that those ethnicities themselves could become redefined.

The earliest book in the genre, *Migrants and Refugees* by Patricia Jeffery,[37] hoped to show 'the way in which certain elements of the migrant's culture can be protected and how children may be brought up in a domestic setting in Britain' – and thereby provide a contrast to the ethnocentric studies of the past which looked at how immigrants adjusted to British society by ceding up their cultures. Similarly, Saifullah Khan, in an essay on Pakistanis ('Mirpuri Villagers at Home and in Bradford'), testifies to a wish to challenge the ethnocentric tendencies of earlier sociologists and emphasises the immigrant viewpoint instead. But she goes further than Jeffery, adding that 'understanding the internal dynamics of an ethnic minority in Britain involves studying the process of interaction or reaction of these cultural preferences and patterns of behaviour with external determinants'.[38] Ethnicity, she points out in another essay on working South Asian women, is flexible and adaptive to changing times and situations.[39]

Brooks and Singh, in a rarified essay on Asian 'brokers' in British foundries, under the pretentious title 'Pivots and Presents' (in Wallman's *Ethnicity at Work*[40]), take some of Khan's ideas to absurd lengths. Having acknowledged that labour shortages led to black recruitment and that racism determined the types of jobs available to blacks, the authors conclude that immigrants' 'own distinctive traditions and their own ethnic identities . . . in turn influenced their occupational and industrial distribution. In a sense, these specific cultural and ethnic aspects were . . . superimposed, on the industrial organisations of the metropolitan country.'

Wallman, in her introduction to the book, bids fair to outvie even Brooks and Singh in the ethnicity versus racism stakes; in her writing there is even a hint that ethnicity and not racism might be the more

important determinant. 'The effect of their ethnicity is therefore dependent upon the state of the economic system and on their bargaining strength within it. Conversely, they will not see, will not accept, will not succeed in the opportunity offered if it is not appropriate to their choice of work and their cultural experience.' (Now we know why black teachers became bus drivers and skilled black workers prefer to do unskilled jobs.)

With Geoffrey Driver, however, our poor little ethnicity is returned to a bearable role – as a means of combating racism. In a widely-publicised study of West Indian 'achievement' in *New Society*, he reported that West Indians were now doing better than whites in 16 + public exams because of their newfound ethnicity and sense of identity, which was helping them achieve.[41] And if the West Indian girls did better than the boys, it was because of factors peculiar to Jamaican family structures – like, say, matriarchy. The implication was (and the media broadcast it thus) that even if there was racism in British schools, black children suffered no disadvantage that ethnicity could not overcome. (Ethnicity must be some sort of boot-strap by which you pulled yourself up.) But more: 'Where ethnic minority pupils are getting better results than majority pupils . . . these West Indian and Asian youngsters are a real and positive resource in the struggle to rehabilitate and redevelop the physical, social, cultural and economic fabric of the industrial towns and cities in which they live . . .' (So just by being minorities, they provided an added bonus to society.) And on to the righteous conclusion: 'We should be more sensitive to community and sex-role differences, not less. Educational progress, in this case at least, means being not only egalitarian, but also pluralist.'

Then there are ethnicity writers for whom the reaction, even resistance, to 'external determinants' such as racism is built into ethnicity. In fact, 'one cannot understand the history and character of these [black] minorities', says James L. Watson, 'without analysing their differing reactions to white racism'. Young Sikhs and Jamaicans 'often feel that they do not "fit" in either culture . . . Largely in response to racism, these two minorities have begun a process of ethnic redefinition . . . which entails the active recreation of a new cultural tradition that only has meaning in the British context.[42]

In Catherine Ballard's hands Watson's 'ethnic redefinition' becomes 'reactive ethnicity': 'While synthesising aspects of both Asian and British cultures some young Asians seem to be reacting to the rejection they experience from British society by taking renewed pride in their separate cultural identity.'[43] And she cites examples that include a return to traditional clothing, native language and the like.

Roger Ballard, in a study of ethnic minorities and the social services, puts this more succinctly. 'Members of the younger generation', he says, 'are utilising their ethnic resources both to resist pressures put

upon them by the majority and to challenge the unequal position in which they find themselves . . . ' Hence, 'what is urgently required is re-cognition of both the experience and the legitimacy of ethnic interests whatever they may be'.[44]

These then are the principal themes and variations of the ethnic school. (There are others like Miles and Phizacklea who dwell on its fringes and need to be dealt with separately.) Quite obviously there is nothing that ethnicity cannot do except change power relations in society. But that, of course, would require a race/class analysis – an investigation of *racism* as a rationale and justification for capitalist exploitation, but without subordinating the cultural aspects to the eco-nomic, for that would be to err on the side of economism. To look exclusively at ethnic relations, on the other hand, is to err on the side of culturalism, culture for its own sake, for defence at best – not culture as a determinant of change, a strategy for combat, a weapon for offence. Culturalism in practice leads to a cul de sac nationalism, defeatist, inward looking, in-breeding – incapable of changing the power relations in society, but content to cope with them, react to them, perhaps even resist them. To put it differently, cultural pluralism, the framework, and multi-culturalism, the solution, deal with neither (institutional) racism nor class questions. 'Reactive ethnicity', or cultural resistance, can only be a resistance to racialism in British soci-ety. Racialism is not about power but about cultural superiority. Racism is not about cultural superiority but about power; and the resistance to racism must in the final analysis be political resistance, expressed perhaps in cultural forms.

The Bengalis who sat down in Brick Lane in 1977 and refused to move were not indulging in an Asian or peasant tradition as a means of recreation on a Sunday morning. They were bringing an Asian cultural form of resistance to bear on their British fight against racism: the fas-cists should not sell their wares in the community, the Bengalis would be terrorised no longer. Equally, the life-styles of Afro-Caribbean youth, however expressed, constitute a political threat to the dominant values of capitalist society. West Indian cultures are, by the very nature of their slave and plantation histories, anti-racist and anti-capitalist. If you have been bought and sold, and lynched and raped and oppressed and exploited, just because of your race, it is not hard to make the con-nection between racism and exploitation. And it is the consciousness of that connection, whether among West Indians or Asians and however arrived at (through slave or peasant exploitation), that makes for politi-cal struggles across race lines; it is its denial that makes for the purely culturalist movements that threaten nobody. The business of black acti-vists has been to keep alive that consciousness and thereby transform race struggle into class struggle. The business of the state has been to prevent such a transformation by diverting the black 'leaven of energy

and resourcefulness' into harmless ethnic channels. And the pluralists, by freezing the dynamics of race struggle in culture or ethnicity, subserve the interests of the state. At best, they are no more than the self-appointed cheer-leaders of ethnic resistance, and as such are absolved from combating the racism of their own organisations, institutions, curricula, practice or whatever; at worst, their theories help to launder social control and serve it up as legitimate black demands.*

It is perhaps the recognition of these facts that makes Miles and Phizacklea stand, self-consciously, to one side of the ethnic school proper. They are prepared to entertain the notion that 'blacks may organise themselves politically' through 'the class unity process, the ethnic organisation process and the black unity process', but conclude that 'racial discrimination in the industrial sphere has forced black workers to pursue their interests through ethnic organisation'. In fact, so different are the 'cultural characteristics of the Asian ethnic groups from the West Indian' and so 'substantial' the 'hostility' between them that it was unlikely that West Indian and Asian workers could 'organise collectively to pursue common interests'.[45]

But how could they have organised collectively when they work separately? For, by and large, West Indians and Asians (men and women separately) have been channelled into different sectors of employment and different sections of the labour process;** management has even gone out of its way to create ethnic shifts. The opportunity for West Indian/Asian solidarity in one factory has been slight – though it did occur at some of the factories which had a mixed labour force, such as the London Rubber Company, GEC Coventry's electro-plating section and, most notably, at Grunwick's, where West Indian drivers (members of the TGWU) came out in support of Asian women process-workers (members of APEX). And it has certainly obtained in the communities and on the streets, particularly among young blacks, where white racialism compounded by police harassment makes no distinction between West Indian and Asian. It has been there in the protests at the murders of Michael Ferreira and Altab Ali, in the Virk Brothers defence committee, in the battle of Southall and in organisations like Blacks Against State Harassment, the Organisation of Women of Asian and African Descent and the Black Socialist Alliance. Some of these organisations may, by the very nature of the struggle, be short-lived, but the struggle itself is continuous and unfolding.

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*The search for black identity, history and culture which emerged (in the late 1960s and early 1970s) had grown spontaneously out of the need to inform black struggles against racism. But, even as they promised to become political, they were co-opted and bought up by the state and handed back to blacks on ethnic self-help platters. Black studies, black history, black arts and crafts became institutionalised into the education system and multi-cultural and multi-ethnic – not *anti-racist* – education became all the rage.

**As they were in the colonies of the Caribbean and East Africa.

And it is precisely this combined militancy of West Indian and Asian youth that has, on the one hand, agitated the state afresh and, on the other, rendered the ethnic theorists *politically* irrelevant – though ideologically they still hold hegemony over education (multi-racial, multi-ethnic), the media (ethnic programmes for ethnic groups), the arts, etc. It is not entirely fortuitous, therefore, that by 1979 the cultural pluralists, their theses completed and their field-work done, should have dispersed to colleges of further education, social work departments, language centres and the like, there to teach the teachers, the social workers, the practitioners of the 1980s – while still attempting, through their ceaseless attendance at conferences and submission of articles to journals like *New Community*, to sell the cultural pluralist model to policy-makers who have already bought it. Nor is it by chance that Banton's school of ethnic sociology should have given way to Rex's school of political sociology – cultural pluralism to political pluralism.

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At first sight, John Rex's preoccupations appear to be the same – for example, he has spoken out in favour of ethnography, he has described in his writing a 'defensive confrontation' amongst young blacks which sounds remarkably similar to 'ethnic redefinition' and 'reactive ethnicity' – and he has published a book under the auspices of the old IRR. But his interest in ethnography is directed towards understanding minorities so that they are not excluded from the political process. His 'defensive confrontation' is not meant to applaud ethnic resistance but to describe the militancy of a disadvantaged black 'underclass'. And his *Race, Community and Conflict*, although part of the IRR's Survey, addressed itself to discrimination in housing in terms of a class hypothesis – albeit housing-class.[46] He is no nearer embracing a cultural pluralist model of race relations today than he was at the BSA Conference of 1969. Besides, his line of race relations descent (and dissent) is longer and more 'radical' than that of most other sociologists cited here – and takes in the struggle at IRR. He is today in a position to dominate race thinking and policy for the next decade or so.* For those reasons alone, it is well to look at his ideas in some detail.[47]

Taking the welfare state as given (albeit arrived at through 'class conflict'), Rex argues that the British working class, unlike the American, is able to organise both economically and politically on its own behalf – the first through its trade unions and the second through the Labour Party, the 'political arm' of the trade union movement.

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*He was appointed director of the Social Science Research Council Research Unit in Ethnic Relations at Aston University as from October 1979.

And, since the Labour Party 'provides one of the two alternative governments in this country', it is 'not merely in a position to interfere with the free capitalist economy in the workers' interests, but it has also succeeded, through the creation of welfare services, in providing the worker with a social wage over and above the wages which he obtains from his employer'. That does not mean that there are no 'differences in the distribution of power and property . . . which lead to bargaining, competition, conflict and compromise between those who are differentially placed within the system' – not only as regards the employment market but also as regards other markets such as housing, education and welfare and social services. Nor does it mean that there are not as many bargaining processes and parties or associations as there are markets or allocative sectors. 'But in practice . . . the Labour Party, as the party of the industrial workers, has acted as the agent of the disadvantaged in all sectors and those other parties become for the most part lobbies within the labour movement.' And in the process of political conflict and bargaining, the worker in the welfare state has achieved not only 'a set of rights as a citizen which are more important to him than those which derive purely from class membership', but also a culture of 'social solidarity' and 'mutual aid' which is in direct contrast to 'the culture of capitalist individualism'.

The 'immigrant minorities', however, have not found entry into this 'complex system'. They have not received the same service and support from the labour movement and working-class culture as have white workers. They do not have the same access to markets. Their position, in fact, 'approximates to a situation' in which they have 'hardly penetrated to positions of property and power', are underprotected in the working-class framework and therefore 'concentrated in the most insecure, dirtiest, heaviest and most ill-paid jobs . . . , have their housing provided separately and on an inferior basis to that of the working class as a whole . . . and find . . . their children . . . concentrated in schools which were inferior to and provided less opportunities for advancement than those attended by the average working-class child'. And to the extent that this is so,* they are fast becoming a class apart, an 'underclass', tending 'to fight separately from and sometimes against the native working class' through their own cultural and political organisations. And even where they 'formally belong to unions and affirm support for them', blacks do not receive the protection in their 'social and cultural spheres' that the labour movement affords the native working class. Hence, to protect themselves from a hostile world, they have had to turn to 'militant black movements which are neighbourhood – rather than work-based and which deal centrally, not

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*Note that Rex does not say that this is so – his commitment is to scenarios, models, ideal types. Hence also the need to quote him at length.

with work problems, but with the problems which the young unemployed and under-employed face in their conflicts with the forces of law and order' – often from a position of 'defensive confrontation'. Not that 'defensive confrontation' is a bad thing, because militancy is more likely to get black workers into the labour movement than the 'paternalism of labour leaders'. There is the danger, however, that some minorities might refuse to identify with society altogether, 'preferring to adopt a pariah position, being in the society and not of it, and developing their own insulated social system'.

The business of the policy-makers, then, is to heal the rifts which might be opened up 'by the continued suppression of Asians and West Indians into an "underclass" position' by integrating them into the mainstream of British working-class politics and affording them the same rights to collective bargaining and the same access to jobs, housing and education as the native working class. And the business of the social scientist in race relations research is to prepare the way for such political action by describing and analysing the black condition – not in terms of the immediate social reality (for, panicky perceptions could well argue for social control), but in terms of the underlying structures that produce and sustain that condition. Which means, of course, that sociologists cannot be impervious to value judgements or be politically neutral – there is a morality that shapes our ends. Nevertheless, they 'cannot by themselves change the world' – they can only provide the understanding that stiffens the political will.

But whose political will? All sorts: governments, unions, politicians, groups, even individuals. What about the state defined as 'the executive committee of the ruling class'? For Rex such a notion of the state does not exist, only power structures and status groups. And class? Yes, class – but class for Rex is not about the social relations of production but about differential access to markets. Hence there are as many classes as there are markets and at least as many political wills as there are 'classes' – a whole plurality of wills. Even the 'underclass' has a political will of sorts – 'defensive confrontation' – which will hopefully get it into the welfare state's class system proper, there to be taken up – and up – by the labour movement and Labour governments.

But how did this underclass come about? Why is it black/colonial? What is the connection between it being black/colonial and its position as an underclass? What does that connection augur for its future – at a time of recession and the dismantling of the welfare state? These, however, are not questions to which Rex addresses himself in the main. When he does raise them, he treats of them disparately, not in a coherent systematic fashion that would lead to holistic analysis. And even then it is left to the reader to pick out the various answers and piece them together. He refers, for instance, to Britain importing 'immigrant

labour according to her needs', but does not say why the labour was black, except to make some reference (elsewhere) to 'colonial social structures' and 'race relations situations'. Again, 'no preparation was made for the reception of immigrants'. Why not? 'A wall of discrimination was thrown up. The immigrant minorities who arrived found themselves stuck in semi-ghetto neighbourhoods...' Why – apart from all that business about differential markets – and even then, why differential in their particular case? Finally, Britain faces a 'new dilemma' of absorbing not 'immigrants and refugees', but 'minority communities with an underclass status into the mainstream of British society'. How did they become an underclass? We have come full circle.

Rex's analysis, in other words, does not show how colonial exploitation threw up an unwanted pool of labour in the colonies which post-war Britain could draw on as and when it pleased without cost to itself; how the ideas of racial superiority, developed in the colonies, were honed into a fine tool of exploitation of 'immigrant' workers by political parties and governments (Labour and Tory alike) and came to inhere in every institution of British society, consigning blacks to the position of a sub-proletariat;† how such institutional racism, in a time of deep recession and severe unemployment, provides a Tory government with a rationale not simply for exploitation but for repatriation; and how, indeed, such a return of labour to its original reserves accords with current imperialist designs to move capital to labour and not vice versa.

These are the things that speak to the experience of the black 'underclass' and tell them how they came to be where they are – and what they can do about it. They are also the things that tell them that what they should want is not an in into the capitalist system but an end to it.* They are, finally, the things that connect them both to the revolutionary working class of this country and to the liberation movements of the Third World and bring to their struggle an international consciousness and dimension.**

To put it on a more rarified level, the analysis presented here shows the centrality of racism to capitalist exploitation, whether in the periphery or in the centre, and points out that the struggle against racism today has also to be a struggle against imperialism. But then again such an understanding stems from an analysis of society in terms of political economy. Rex, however, is a self-confessed political sociologist. Political sociology in the final analysis – Rex's political sociology at any

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†Underclass for Rex means out-class.
*Even if blacks did not know about the capitalist 'state', they would have, out of their own experience of racism, invented one.
**In Rex's hands this connection is not so much organic as metaphysical and is the subject not of hope but of warning (qualified of course). 'The immigrant still has links with his own homeland, and if he is forced into a reactive militancy this may come to be defined not in metropolitan European terms, but in terms of the Third World Revolution.'

rate – entrusts the task of changing society to political parties, political economy puts it in the hands of the oppressed and the exploited.

As a programme for policy-makers, however, Rex's arguments are fine, but then they do not need all this theory to convince them – only a belief in the welfare state which, if they want to keep intact, should include the black underclass. Whom is Rex going to speak to, though, when the party in power represents a benighted capitalism which is determined to dis-assemble the welfare state altogether? Rex has an out there, too, for although his analysis seems to be frozen in the welfare state model, he implies that his model itself can hold only 'so long as the balance of forces prevails' or there is 'a truce in the class war'. But then he also believes that sociologists could help to 'shift the debate on to a different level, where questions about the social system can be asked and debated anew by all parties'.

This is policy-oriented research at its best – both moral and political – combining both Mason's early morality with Deakin's latter-day purposiveness. If it is sometimes ethnic-oriented (Rex does say that ethnography in helping to understand minority cultures can play a positive political role), it still does not smack of the paternalism of the ethnic school – particularly if the researchers are 'black' and/or 'left'. If it is pluralist, it is not culturally so, but politically. Rex is not a do-gooder, a cheer-leader even; he is a go-between, a referee, an ombudsman – a new radical in old clothes. If it sometimes smacks of marxism, put it down to terminology (confused of course) not to analysis – for Rex is a good man lost among Weberians.

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CEDRIC ROBINSON

Richard Wright: marxism and the petite-bourgeoisie*

> ... at the moment when a people begin to realize a *meaning* in their
> suffering, the civilization that engenders that suffering is doomed.[1]
>
> *Richard Wright*

The significance of Richard Wright as a black writer, as an intellectual
and social activist has yet to be firmly established in the minds of most us
us.[2] Certainly he was a most powerful writer, but was his literature art or
propaganda? Was his work the product of a creative, imaginative and
undoctrinaire mind, or the anguished thrust of ideology? And if his
writing was essentially propaganda, what were its particular purposes?
to whom was it directed? and for whom? These are the sorts of questions
which haunt Wright's image.

The ambiguity surrounding Wright is, in part, a consequence of his
own intellectual odyssey. More precisely it is a consequence of his public
honesty about the voyage. It was a journey which took him from
marxism, and through existentialism, and finally to black national-
ism – a journey which could be retraced biographically from his mem-
bership in the American Communist Party in the early 1930s to his death
in France in 1960.

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*This article is an attempt to extend the analysis of Cedric Robinson's previous piece, 'The
emergent marxism of Richard Wright's ideology', *Race & Class* (Vol. XIX, no. 3, 1978).

But another and equally important source for the undefined character of Wright's legacy is the several and remarkably extensive campaigns of vilification launched against him by the American left, the American liberal intelligentsia and American bureaucrats. These ranged from the literary attacks on Wright by writers such as James Baldwin,[3] to the political assaults of figures like James Ford,[4] the black communist Ben Burns,[5] the then editor of *Ebony*, the deliberately distorted reports in *Time* magazine on Wright and others,[6] the machinations of the Central Intelligence Agency,[7] and threats from once-powerful, but now almost forgotten anti-communists like David Schine.[8] It appears to be a fair statement that though these distinct and, in some instances, opposing political factions had rather different interests in the destruction of Wright's influence on American politics and literature, they did concur on the desirability of the suppression of his work and ideas.[9]

In any case, the result was the same: Wright's self-imposed geographical exile was transformed into an intellectual and political isolation. Moreover, some of these same forces sought further retribution from Wright by filling his life in Europe and Great Britain with harassments of both petty and terrifying dimensions.[10] It was intended that Wright realise the full consequence of criticising American domestic racial policies and attacking American foreign policy in the Third World.

Yet despite his detractors and their sponsors, despite the established and powerful political and cultural authorities of American society, some of Wright's work and ideas survived. The re-emergence of Wright's importance in American thought may appear at first ironical. So many of his critics are now rather thin shadows in history. But, more accurately, it is the result of the social and historical contradictions of American capitalism and its particular social order.

In the midst of the black consciousness and nationalist movements of the 1960s, the seemingly irresistible dictates of the market compelled the republishing of the *Outsider* (1965), *Native Son* (1966), *Black Boy* (1966), *Eight Men* (1969) and later, *American Hunger* (1977).[11] They were works which spoke to a generation which Wright did not live to see but had anticipated. Significant, too, was the emergence of younger and equally militant black writers and playwrights (among them John A. Williams, Leroi Jones, Ed Bullins, Melvin Van Peebles and Ishmael Reed). Much of their work would have fallen quite easily into what one American critic, Robert Bone, had called 'the Wright School' ('For the Wright School, literature is an emotional catharsis – a means of dispelling the inner tensions of race. Their novels often amount to a prolonged cry of anguish and despair. Too close to their material, feeling it too intensely, these novelists lack a sense of form and of thematic line.'[12]), except for the fact that Bone had already announced

that the death of that school had occurred twenty years earlier: 'By the late 1940's the vein of literary material unearthed by Richard Wright had been all but worked out. The market for protest had become saturated'.[13] It does appear that Bone was a bit premature.

More remarkable, however, than the sheer survival of Wright's work, is the theoretical and analytical power of his ideas. This achievement of Wright's, with the stimulus of historical materialism and psychoanalysis, fell much closer to an emergent European literature (Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, Koestler, Lukacs, Marcuse, Kolakowski) in the post Second World War period than to any American fashion. Like many European left intellectuals, Wright was moving beyond classical marxism and the marxism inspired by Lenin in order to come to terms with a world constituted of material and spiritual forces historically unique. Wright's reach, consequently, can be said to be much longer than that implied by the terms employed by many of his American critics. He was never merely a 'racial novelist', a 'protest writer', or a 'literary rebel'.[14] Indeed, much of his work was a direct confrontation with the leading ideas and ideational systems of contemporary western political and social thought. His arena was the totality of western civilisation and its constitutive elements: industrialisation, urbanisation, alienation, class, racism, exploitation and the hegemony of bourgeois ideology. His work thus constituted an inquiry.

Wright's persistence in his investigation of western society was an important factor contributing to the achievement of a certain consistency in his work. As artist, as essayist, as critic, as political activist, it is clear that he arranged and re-arranged many times the elements making up the phenomenological display of western development. He knew the names of western experience but was less certain of what he knew of their nature and their systemic and historical relationships. There were questions to which he still had to find answers: Was the working class a social reality? Could class consciousness supercede racism as an ideology? Was the Party the vanguard of the proletariat? Was marxism more than a critique of capitalism? These were some of the issues to which Wright had not found satisfactory answers in organised and organisational politics. Ultimately, it would be because of his particular skill for transforming theoretical abstractions and constructs into recognisably human experience that it became possible for him to make those distinctions between dogma and reality so important to his development.

Theoretically and ideologically, Wright came to terms with western thought and life through black nationalism. However, the basis for his critique of western society was his experience of the historical formation of black peoples in Africa and the diaspora, from the Gold Coast to the Mississippi Delta.[15] Psychically and intellectually he was drawn to attend those same forces which produced the critical

inspections of W.E.B. DuBois, George Padmore and C.L.R. James. As Michel Fabre puts it:

> Wright's originality, then, is that he completely understood and often reiterated ... that the situation of the Black in the twentieth century, and in particular during the crucial period from the Depression to the advent of Black Power, was exceptional. These years saw the awakening of the Third World and with it the enormous mutation of our civilisation. 'The liberation of the colored peoples of the world is the most important event of our century,' is a refrain that runs throughout Wright's work. The same message, delivered half a century before by W.E.B. DuBois, did not have the same existentialist dimension.[16]

Wright had not created these forces which were transforming western society, but it was his intention to give these events a meaning independent of those interpretations bounded by the interests of western civilisation as articulated by its intellectuals and ideologues.

Still there are some who have argued that Wright fulfilled little of his promise. Harold Cruse, among them, has written that Wright 'was so ideologically blinded by the smog of Jewish-Marxist nationalism that he was unable to see his *own* clearly'; that Wright had not understood 'that the classics of Marx and Engels were written not for the proletariat but for the intelligentsia';[17] and, finally, that 'He could not gather into himself all the ingredients of nationalism; to create values and mould concepts by which his race was to "struggle, live and die".'[18]

Here, then, are two of the several interpretations which attach to Wright's significance. The first places him within a tradition of radical black thinkers. The second expels him from that same legacy. In the following pages we shall examine which of these two summaries of Wright's work is more appropriate.

The novel as politics

Richard Wright was by his work primarily a novelist. But as a novelist involved in social action, his novels were more than a complaint against or an observation of the human condition. Wright intended that his writing engage and confront a political reality of movement. He was a novelist who recognised that a part of his task was to come to terms with the character of social change and the agencies that emerged as attempts to direct that change. His early development consciously reflected this concern beginning with his 1937 essay, 'Blueprint for Negro Writing'.* In this essay we see the first suggestions of a critical independence of thought in Wright.

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*Reprinted in Notes and documents, pp.403-12.

Perspective . . . is that fixed point in intellectual space where a writer stands to view the struggles, hopes, and sufferings of his people . . .

Of all the problems faced by writers who as a whole have never allied themselves with world movements, perspective is the most difficult of achievement.[19]

Wright is quite openly declaring that he means his work to reflect a committed intellect, one informed by a political intention and the process of historical movement. He is also dedicating himself to the task which would occupy him for the remaining twenty-three years of his life: the location of his 'perspective' in the complex of struggles for liberation in the Third World. As we shall see, what Wright ultimately discovered was a psychological and intellectual locus unlike anything his experience of western radicalism and activism could encompass. Fortunately, a great part of his preparation for that discovery can be found in his novels.

When we consider Richard Wright's fictional and explicitly political work, three novels (*Native Son*, *The Outsider* and 'Island of Hallucination') and one collection of short stories (*Uncle Tom's Children*) stand out. Together, these works both chronicle and interpret Wright's experiences with American communism and political action. They also constitute studies of marxism as a theory of history and social revolution, of the social and psychological development of the American working class, and of the historical and ideological development of American blacks. Serious attention to these works should not be deflected by the form through which Wright sought to articulate his ideas. Indeed, it must be recognised that his works are uniquely suited to their tasks. Using this form, Wright could reconstruct and weight the extraordinary complexities and subtleties of radical politics as he and others had experienced it. His characters could live with and struggle through crises he had encountered. They could 'test' the meanings and significances he had given to those experiences. His novels were consequently much more *authentic* documents than the conventional forms of history, biography and political tract for they were constructed from lives with which he was intimate. In these novels, Wright could achieve his intention of weaving living consciousness into the impress of social theory and ideology.[20]

Wright had joined the American communist movement in the early 1930s. This was a period which coincided with an intensification of the Party's work among blacks following the Sixth Congress of the Comintern's 'resolution on the Negro Question' in 1928 and the beginnings of the Scottsboro trials in 1931. Wright left the Party a decade later. During those years he worked in the various capacities of organiser, member of a black Party cell in Chicago, officer in the John Reed Clubs and writer for the communist press. At first, his work for

the Party was to take place primarily in Chicago; later he was transferred to Harlem.[21] It was, of course, during this time that his writing was most directly influenced by the Party. He proved to be very good at it. By 1937, the year he had published 'Blueprint . . . ', he had become, in Daniel Aaron's words, 'the Party's most illustrious proletarian author'.[22]

Wright took this responsibility as a proletarian writer quite seriously. He was committed to the task of expressing working-class thought, consciousness and experience. One recollection of this period is his first impression of the Party: 'The Communists, I felt, had oversimplified the experience of those whom they sought to lead . . . they had missed the meaning of the lives of the masses . . . '[23] Wright meant to put this right, the proletariat had to be allowed its own voice. It was just as clear to him that he carried a particular, racial responsibility towards the black working classes:

> The Negro writer who seeks to function within his race as a purposeful agent has a serious responsibility . . . a deep, informed, and complex consciousness is necessary; a consciousness which draws for its strength upon the fluid lore of a great people, and moulds this lore with the concepts that move and direct the forces of history today.
> . . . the Negro writer . . . is being called upon to do no less than create values by which his race is to struggle, live and die.
> . . . because his writing possesses the potential cunning to steal into the inmost recesses of the human heart, because he can create myths and symbols that inspire a faith in life . . . [24]

As a black writer, Wright was presuming that the intelligentsia had the obligation to construct the ideological and symbolic means through which an emerging black movement would be formed. Still, the work of this intelligentsia had to be grounded in the culture of their people.

Working with these conceptions, Wright was clearly reflecting an earlier marxian tradition, one in which Lenin had transformed a 'renegade' petite-bourgeoisie into a revolutionary vanguard.[25] (Wright appears to have always opposed the Stalinist anti-intellectualism which marked the communist movement domestically and internationally in the 1930s.) But Wright was also mindful of a second and separate tradition which had emerged among blacks in the US during the late eighteenth and mid-nineteenth centuries. At these historical moments, from among the ranks of free blacks, there had emerged an intellectually, economically and politically élite class which had assumed leadership on behalf of the largely enslaved black masses. This nucleus later contributed significantly to the formation of the black middle class. The ethos of this class and its socio-historical traditions had been given its most enduring name by W.E.B. DuBois: the talented tenth.[26]

Wright was thus suffusing two distinct and opposing traditions. But more importantly, even here while he was ostensibly addressing black intellectuals, he was also going about the work of recreating his world in his own ideological terms.

Blacks as the negation of capitalism

For Wright, it was not sufficient for black liberation that his people come to terms with the critique of capitalist society. He had observed: 'Marxism is but the starting point. No theory of life can take the place of life.'[27] As a critique of capitalist society, marxism was necessary, of course, but it was ultimately an *internal* critique. The epistemological nature of historical materialism took bourgeois society on its own terms, i.e., presuming the primacy of economic forces and structures.[28] As such, the historical development from feudalism of the bourgeoisie as a class served as a logical model for the emergence of the proletariat as a negation of capitalist society.[29] Wright appeared quite early to have understood this thesis as a fundamental error in marxist thought. Even as early as 1937, he had begun to argue that it was necessary that blacks transform the marxist critique into an expression of their own emergence as a negation of western capitalism.

Though immersed in the American radical movement with its Euro-centric ideology, it had not taken Wright very long to reach the conclusion that the historic development of black people in the United States constituted the most total contradiction to western capitalist society:

> The workers of a minority people, chafing under exploitation, forge organisational forms of struggle...Lacking the handicaps of false ambition and property, they have access to a wide social vision and a deep social consciousness...Their organisations show greater strength, adaptability, and efficiency than any other group or class in society.[30]

Wright assumed that the alienation of black workers from American society was more total than that experienced by the 'white' working classes formed in Europe and America. This, indeed, was the more profound significance of black nationalism, and one with which the black intellectual had to come to terms:

> ...the emotional expression of group-feeling which puzzles so many whites and leads them to deplore what they call 'black chauvinism' is not a morbidly inherent trait of the Negro, but rather the reflex expression of a life whose roots are imbedded deeply in Southern soil. Negro writers must accept the nationalist implications of their lives...they must accept the concept of nationalism because, in order to transcend it, they must *possess* and *understand* it. And a

nationalist spirit in Negro writing means a nationalism carrying the highest possible pitch of social consciousness. It means a nationalism that knows its origins, its limitations, that is aware of the dangers of its position, that knows its ultimate aims are unrealisable within the framework of capitalist America; a nationalism whose reason for being lies in the simple fact of self-possession and in the consciousness of the interdependence of people in modern society.[31]

Wright's argument and its language strongly suggest the elements within the Party with which he was in ideological conflict. In using the phrase 'black chauvinism' – its second element being a term used most frequently within the Party as a more objective interpretation for what was commonly referred to as nationalism – Wright designated his first target: white marxian ideologues. His second target, deracinated black intellectuals, were addressed as the recipients of a new history. They had to be made to realise that black nationalism was an initial and historically logical stage of a more profoundly universal consciousness.

Wright was arguing that American blacks had been recreated from their African origins by an oppressive system of capitalist exploitation which had at one and the same time integrated them into the emergent organisation of industrial production while suspending them from the full impact of bourgeois ideology. Perhaps Wright put this most succinctly several years later in *The Outsider* when Ely Houston, one of Wright's two spokesmen in the novel, observed:

> The way Negroes were transported to this country and sold into slavery, then stripped of their tribal culture and held in bondage; and then allowed, so teasingly and over so long a period of time, to be sucked into our way of life is something which resembles the rise of all men . . .
>
> They are outsiders and . . . They are going to be self-conscious; they are going to be gifted with a double vision, for, being Negroes, they are going to be both *inside* and *outside* of our culture at the same time . . . Negroes will develop unique and specially defined psychological types. They will become psychological men, like the Jews . . . They will not only be Americans or Negroes; they will be centers of knowing, so to speak . . . The political, social, and psychological consequences of this will be enormous . . .[32]

Wright believed that racism, the very character of the system by which black workers had been exploited, had mediated their internalisation of the ruling ideas of American society. He went on to assert that, unlike the dominant sectors of European and Euro-American proletariats, the black proletariat – historically from the legal and political disciplines of slavery to its peculiar condition as free wage labour – had developed a psychic and cultural identity independent from bourgeois ideology.

This construction of Wright's pushed the insights of DuBois[33] and others far beyond the critique of black-white labour solidarity. What Wright was suggesting went even beyond the most extreme position in the 1930s of American radicals that blacks were the vanguard of the American working class.[34]

Wright was asserting that the black revolutionary movement, in the process of transcending a chauvinistic nationalism, was emerging as an historical force which would challenge the very foundation of western civilisation:

> Reduced to its simplest terms, theme for Negro writers will rise from understanding the meaning of their being transplanted from a 'savage' to a 'civilized' culture in implications. It means that Negro writers must have in their consciousness the fore-shortened picture of the *whole*, nourishing culture from which they were torn in Africa, and of the long, complex (and for the most part, unconscious) struggle to regain in some form and under alien conditions of life a *whole* culture again.[35]

For Wright, it was at precisely this point, in the culture's ideational, conceptual and ideological extension, that the writer and other intellectuals are required. In the construction of myths and symbols emergent from the experience of black people, the responsibility of the intellectuals was 'to create values by which [their] race is to struggle, live and die'. This is precisely the task Wright was assuming sixteen years later in *The Outsider*.

The Outsider as a critique of Christianity and marxism

The Outsider was completed several years after Wright had left the American communist movement. It was received, however, as a further elaboration of Wright's reason for his action.[36] Yet the novel's treatment of the Party was less in the tradition of Chester Himes' vitriolic *Lonely Crusade* or Ralph Ellison's satiric *The Invisible Man* than in that of Arthur Koestler's *Darkness at Noon*.[37] Though Wright did develop in *The Outsider* a critique of the American left's race politics and of Stalinism, his intent was much broader, his object much more far ranging.

The novel is a parable. It is a moral, philosophic and political exercise. Like the myth in phatic groups, the purpose is to demonstrate the terrible consequence to the human spirit as well as to social organisation of a total exorcising of social ideology. In *White Man Listen*, Wright would declare:

> I maintain that the ultimate effect of white Europe upon Asia and Africa was to cast millions into a kind of spiritual void; I maintain

that it suffused their lives with a sense of meaninglessness. I argue that it was not merely physical suffering or economic deprivation that has set over a billion and a half colored people in violent political motion ...

... The dynamic concept of the void that must be filled, a void created by a thoughtless and brutal impact of the West upon a billion and a half people, is more powerful than the concept of class conflict, and more universal.[38]

Without myths, that is without meaning, consciousness is set adrift into terror. The desperation which is the condition of this degree of alienation (or Max Scheler's *ressentiment*, or Husserl's 'crisis')[39] inevitably requires violence. Violence is the final, the last possible form that social action may assume.

Moreover, Wright was demonstrating both the necessity and inevitability of ideology *and* its arbitrariness. No matter what meanings ideologies systematise, they are always subject to the abuses of power. When ideology is used for the purpose of domination, it must be opposed, not by a counter-ideology but by the negation of ideology: theory. In short, he was making the case for the necessity for a critical commitment, the sort of commitment which achieves its purpose by extraction from the historical legacy: the culture of a people. Such a commitment is made possible only through a consciousness capable of recreating meaning.

In *The Outsider*, Wright sought to subvert the two ideological and philosophic traditions at the heart of modern western culture. Firstly, he ridiculed the Judeo-Christian tradition by creating a protagonist whose very name is contradiction: Cross Damon – the demon Christ. Cross Damon has escaped Judeo-Christian morality through the recognition of its operative psychic force: a destructive, debilitating dread – guilt. Just as Marx earlier had recognised that religion (that is Judaism) 'is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the sentiment of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions',[40] Wright had perceived the truer historical significance of Christianity among blacks as not an instrument of domination but as a philosophic adaptation to oppression.

Moreover, he understood the resignation of black Christianity as only one element in the culture of blacks. In black music, another more strident voice existed opposing that guilt:

... this music was the rhythmic flauntings of guilty feelings, the syncopated outpourings of frightened joy existing in guises forbidden and despised by others ... Negroes had been made to live in but not of the land of their birth ... the injunctions of an alien Christianity and the strictures of white laws had evoked in them the very longings and desires that that religion and law had been designed

to stifle . . . blue-jazz was a rebel art blooming seditiously under the condemnations of a Protestant ethic . . . Blue-jazz was the scornful gesture of men turned ecstatic in their state of rejection . . . the recreations of the innocently criminal . . . [41]

The forces of science and technology and the processes of the proletarianisation of black workers were orchestrating the supercession of black Christian resignation by this second, derisively angry, consciousness.

Yet Wright was also critical of marxism, the second and more modern radical western tradition. It too was profoundly limited theoretically, and subject to the abuses of narrow political interests. Marxism had ultimately failed to come to terms with nationalism, with consciousness, with racism, with western civilisation, with industrialisation and with the history of blacks. Wright had already demonstrated some of its limitations in *Native Son*. Daniel Aaron, commenting on Bigger Thomas' communist lawyer, had observed, 'Even Boris Max never really understands Bigger, and is frightened by Bigger's vision of himself.'[42] Wright made this same point even more tellingly in *The Outsider*. Wright maintained that the purposes of marxism as employed in American communism were less analytical than political. The result was neither theory nor praxis but the achievement of power. Ironically, in the second novel, it was the character of Hilton, also a Party functionary, who spoke for Wright. Hilton, driven to candour by desperation, betrays the crude agreement upon which Party support of black liberation depended: manipulation. Wright (Cross) then reflects to himself:

Did the average white American suspect that men like Hilton existed, men who could easily rise above the racial hatred of the mob and cynically make use of the defensive attitudes instilled in Negroes as weapons in their own bitter struggle for power?[43]

But Wright would instruct us never to expect to hear such revelations as Hilton's. He had heard them as a part of his experience, an experience which he would subject to the marxian critique which was now also a part of his way of grappling with reality.

Marxism as an ideology and theory of history, Wright argued, was a product of a petite-bourgeoisie, in particular, the intellectuals:

You must assume that I know what this is all about. Don't tell me about the nobility of labor, the glorious future. *You* don't believe in that. That's for others, and you damn well know it . . . You Jealous Rebels are intellectuals who know your history and you are anxious not to make the mistakes of your predecessors in rebellious undertakings.[44]

He was no longer convinced that marxism as a theory, as a theory of history or social revolution, was correct but he did understand its seductiveness. He would write in 1960: 'Marxist ideology in particular is but a transitory make-shift pending a more accurate diagnosis . . . Communism may be but a painful compromise containing a definition of man by sheer default.'[45] He suspected that marxism, alike with Christianity as an ideology, masked the complexities of history and social experience. Its truer function was the social and intellectual cohesion of the petite-bourgeoisie – a class very different from the proletariat:

> . . . one minority section of the white society in or under which he lives will offer the educated elite of Asia and Africa or black America an interpretation of the world which impels to action, thereby assuaging his feelings of inferiority. Nine times out of ten it can be easily pointed out that the ideology offered has no relation to the plight of the educated black, brown, or yellow elite . . . But that ideology does solve something . . .
>   . . . it enabled the Negro or Asian or African to meet revolutionary fragments of the hostile race on a plane of equality.[46]

Still, in this his most devasting criticism of communism, Wright was relying on a notion of class struggle:

> These men who rise to challenge the rulers are jealous men. They feel that they are just as good as the men who rule; indeed, they suspect that they are better. They see the countless mistakes that are being made by the men who rule and they think that they could do a more honest, a much cleaner job, a more efficient job.[47]

Such was Wright's thesis on the development of marxism as a class-specific ideology. And in some ways, he was echoing Marx's own but more mystical explanation of marxism:

> Finally, in times when the class struggle nears the decisive hour, the process of dissolution going on within the ruling class, in fact within the whole range of society, assumes such a violent, glaring character, that a small section of the ruling class cuts itself adrift, and joins the revolutionary class, the class that holds the future in its hand . . . so now a portion of the bourgeoisie goes over to the proletariat, and in particular, a portion of the bourgeois ideologists, who have raised themselves to the level of comprehending theoretically the historical movement as a whole.[48]

By the early 1950s, Wright had come to his similar conclusion – one which we have seen he retained for the rest of his life – but with a different meaning: marxist theory was an expression of petite-bourgeois consciousness and its critique of bourgeois society and capitalism was

most fundamentally addressed to that class' suffocation by the authority of the bourgeois ruling class.

Yet the opposition of marxist theory to capitalist society was useful to Wright, *theoretically*. Indeed, the historical and revolutionary role which Wright assigned to blacks had at its base a materialist dialectic. As previously indicated, Wright recognised black nationalism as a product, in part, of both the objective necessities of capitalist development and accumulation, and its system of exploitation. As he turned towards the ideology of black nationalism, he sought to comprehend its emergence in the contradictions of day-to-day experience:

> ...every day in this land some white man is cussing out some defenseless Negro. But that white bastard is too stupid to realise that his actions are being duplicated a million times in a million other spots by other whites who feel hatred for Negroes just like he does. He's too blind to see that this daily wave of a million tiny assaults builds up a vast reservoir of resentment in Negroes.[49]

Thus Wright echoed another powerful contribution to the development of marxism: Hegel's the Cunning of Reason.

But where Wright differed most with others who could employ a marxist approach was in his characterisation of the historical forces of ideology. Ideology was the special political instrument of the petite-bourgeoisie. Wright was arguing that the renegades of this class which had served historically to produce the dominant ideas of the bourgeoisie, had themselves become contemptuous of the ruling class. The Jealous Rebels had declared, as Marx himself had written: 'the bourgeoisie is unfit any longer to be the ruling class in society, and to impose its conditions of existence upon society as an over-riding law. It is unfit to rule because it is incompetent'.[50]

In his criticisms of marxism, then, Wright was not entirely rejecting marxism but attempting to locate it, to provide a sense of the boundaries of its authority. As a *theory* of society, he found it dissatisfying, indeed, reductionist. By itself it was insufficiently prescient of the several levels of collective consciousness. As an *ideology*, he recognised that it had never transcended its origins. It remained an ideology *for* the working classes rather than an ideology *of* the working classes. However, as a *method* of social analysis he found it compelling. He had not abandoned the conception of the relations of production as a basis for the critique of capitalist society nor the importance of the class relations of production. Still, the critique of capitalism was only the beginning of the struggle for liberation.

It is from this critical perspective that Wright joins with one of the few black women he has sympathetically drawn, Sarah Hunter. When she cajoles her husband, Bob, the frightened and Party-subservient black organiser, she is speaking for Wright: 'everywhere I've

looked ... I've seen nothing but white folks kicking niggers who are kneeling down'. 'I want to be one of them who tells the *others* to obey, see? Read your Marx and organise.'[51]

From his experience in the American Party, and from *his* reading of Marx, Wright had come to the conclusion that no people's liberation is the result of their abject surrender of critical judgment. Certainly it was not the prerogative of black intellectuals to surrender the cultural heritage of their people: the emergent revolutionary consciousness of black nationalism.

Very little remains then of the Wright which Harold Cruse presents to us. Perhaps, like Baldwin, Cruse had also felt the need 'to kill the father'. Doubtless, too, the explanation for Cruse's error is much more complex. But irrespective of the origins of Cruse's portrait of Wright, a closer reading of the central works written by Wright over a span of more than two decades reveals a most powerful and self-possessed black thinker. Wright struggled towards a synthesis of marxism and black nationalist thought to match those of his colleagues, George Padmore (*PanAfricanism or Communism*) and C.L.R. James (*The Black Jacobins* and *Notes on Dialectics*, to name two). And together, their several works – along with those of DuBois – are an extraordinary legacy to blacks in the western hemisphere and elsewhere. In them, one can discover an independent and richly suggestive critique of the modern world – a critique whose voice is the most authentic sounding of the brutal depths of western civilisation and its history. There lies, in those works, the beginnings of black revolutionary theory.

References

1   Richard Wright, 'Blueprint for Negro Writing', *New Challenge* (Fall 1937), p. 57.
2   For an example of the continuing confusion surrounding Wright, see Tone Mwenifumbo, 'Richard Wright: Revolutionary or Cynic?', in *Africa, An International Business, Economic and Political Monthly*, (London, No. 82, June 1978), pp. 107 and 109.
3   See James Baldwin's *Notes of a Native Son* (New York, 1952), and *Nobody Knows My Name* (New York, 1961). See also Ellen Wright's accounts of Baldwin and Wright in Faith Berry, 'Portrait of a Man as Outsider', *Negro Digest* (December 1968), pp. 27-37.
4   See James Ford, 'The Case of Richard Wright', *Daily Worker* (5 September 1944).
5   See Ben Burns, 'They're Not Uncle Tom's Children', *The Reporter* (Vol. 14, 8 March 1956), pp. 21-3.
6   See 'Amid the Alien Corn', unidentified author, *Time* (17 November 1958), p. 28.
7   Wright dealt with the CIA's activities in the American black movement and in the black expatriate community in France in two works: his unpublished manuscript, 'Island of Hallucination', and his speech to students and members of the American Church in Paris (8 November 1960), entitled 'The Situation of the Black Artist and Intellectual in the United States'. With respect to the CIA, Wright's comments in his speech have been summarised by Michel Fabre in *The Unfinished Quest of Richard Wright* (New York, 1973), p. 518. For more on Wright and the CIA see Constance Webb, *Richard Wright* (New York, 1968), pp. 375-7 and 396; and Berry, op. cit.

8   See Hoyt Fuller's interview with Chester Himes in *Black World* (Vol. 21, March 1972), p. 93; Webb, op. cit., pp. 417 and 312.

9   See Berry, op. cit., pp. 34f.

10 Fabre has included in his biography the following letter which Wright wrote to Margit de Sabloniere on 30 March 1960: 'You must not worry about my being in danger ... I am not exactly unknown here and I have personal friends in the de Gaulle cabinet itself. Of course, I don't want anything to happen to me, but if it does, my friends will know exactly where it comes from. If I tell you these things, it is to let you know what happens. So far as the Americans are concerned, I'm worse than a Communist, for my work falls like a shadow across their policy in Asia and Africa. That's the problem; they've asked me time and again to work for them: but I'd die first ... But they try to divert me with all kinds of foolish tricks.' Fabre, op. cit., p. 509.

11 *American Hunger* is the title Wright originally suggested (among others) for his unpublished manuscript 'Island of Hallucination'. The material published under the former title is in large measure the parts of *Black Boy* which Harper expunged from its 1945 edition. Darryl Pinckney would appear to be wrong when he suggests in his review of *American Hunger* that Wright himself was responsible for the deletion (see 'Richard Wright: the Unnatural History of a Native Son', *Village Voice* (4 July 1977), p. 80) since Wright had published much of the material in the *Atlantic Monthly* (September and August, 1944), under the title 'I Tried to be a Communist'.

12 Robert Bone, *The Negro Novel in America* (New Haven, 1965), p. 158.

13 Ibid., p. 160.

14 See Bone, op. cit., and Addison Gayle, Jr., *The Way of the New World* (Garden City, 1976) for these characterisations of Wright's work.

15 For the Gold Coast (now Ghana) see Wright's essay *Black Power* (New York, 1954).

16 Fabre, op. cit., p. xviii.

17 Harold Cruse, *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual* (New York), p. 182.

18 Ibid., p. 188.

19 Wright, 'Blueprint ... ', op. cit., p. 61.

20 Wright, quite early on in his Party experience while reflecting on his mother's reaction of horror to communist propaganda, had come to the conclusion that: 'They had a program, an ideal, but they had not yet found a language.' Richard Crossman (ed.), *The God That Failed* (New York, 1965), p. 107.

21 See Michel Fabre, op. cit., pp. 89-200; and Webb, op. cit., pp. 114-66.

22 Daniel Aaron, 'Richard Wright and the Communist Party', *New Letters* (Winter 1971), p. 178.

23 Crossman, op. cit., pp. 107-8. For some other attempts to deal with the development of thought specific to the working class, see E.P. Thompson's *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York, 1966); Stanley Feldstein and Lawrence Costello (eds.), *The Ordeal of Assimilation* (Garden City, 1974); and the special issue, 'The Origins of Left Culture in the US: 1880-1940', *Cultural Correspondence/Green Mountain Irregulars* (6-7, Spring 1978).

24 Wright, 'Blueprint ... ', op. cit., p. 59.

25 See Alfred Meyer, *Leninism* (New York, 1971), pp. 40-1; and Leonard Shapiro, 'Two Years that Shook the World', *New York Review of Books* (31 March 1977), pp. 3-4.

26 See Immanuel Geiss, *The Pan-African Movement* (London, 1974), pp. 163-75, and p. 213.

27 Wright, 'Blueprint ... ', op. cit., p. 60.

28 Jean Baudrillard, *The Mirror of Production* (St. Louis, 1975).

29 See Cornelius Castoriadis, 'On the History of the Workers' Movement', *Telos* (Winter, 1976-7), pp. 3-42.

30 Wright, 'Blueprint ... ', op. cit., p. 54.

31   Ibid., p. 58.
32   Richard Wright, *The Outsider* (New York, 1953), pp. 118-9.
33   See W.E.B. DuBois' *Black Reconstruction in American 1860-1880* (New York, 1971).
34   See Theodore Draper, *American Communism and Soviet Russia* (New York, 1960); Dan Carter, *Scottsboro: A Tragedy of the American South* (New York, 1969); and Wilson Record, *The Negro and the Communist Party* (New York, 1971).
35   Wright, 'Blueprint . . .', op. cit., pp. 62-3.
36   See Fabre, op. cit., pp. 365f; and Webb, op. cit., p. 312.
37   See Cedric Robinson, 'The Emergent Marxism of Richard Wright's Ideology', *Race & Class* (Spring 1978), pp. 221-37.
38   Richard Wright, *White Man Listen!* (Garden City, 1957), pp. 34-5. For the function of myth, see Claude Levi-Strauss, 'The Myth of Asdiwal', in Edmund Leach (ed.), *The Structural Study of Myth and Totemism* (London, 1969).
39   See Giovanni Piana, 'History and Existence in Husserl's Manuscripts', *Telos* (No. 13, Fall 1972), pp. 86-164; Georg Lukacs, 'On the Responsibility of Intellectuals', *Telos* (Vol. 2, no. 1, Spring 1969), pp. 123-31; William Leiss' review essay on Husserl and Paul Piccone's 'Reading the *Crisis*', in *Telos* (No. 8, Summer 1971), pp.110-21 and pp. 121-9, respectively.
40   Karl Marx, 'Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*: Introduction', in Robert Tucker (ed.) *The Marx-Engels Reader* (New York, 1972), p. 12.
41   Wright, *The Outsider*, op. cit., p. 129.
42   Aaron, op. cit., p. 180.
43   Wright, *The Outsider*, op. cit., p. 227.
44   Ibid., p. 334.
45   Richard Wright, 'The Voiceless Ones', *Saturday Review* (16 April 1960), p. 22.
46   Wright, *White Man . . .*, op. cit., pp. 19-20.
47   Wright, *The Outsider*, op. cit., p. 334.
48   Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, in Tucker, op. cit., p. 343.
49   Wright, *The Outsider*, op. cit., p. 227.
50   Marx, *The Communist . . .*, op. cit., p. 345.
51   Wright, *The Outsider*, op. cit., pp. 176-7.

STEPHEN CASTLES

The social time-bomb: education of an underclass in West Germany

Introduction

The immigration experienced by all western European industrial nations since 1945 is generally regarded as having two distinct forms: first, the permanent settlement of black citizens from former colonies in Britain, France and Holland; secondly, the temporary recruitment of 'guestworkers' from Mediterranean countries for a limited period of employment in West Germany, Switzerland, France, Sweden, etc. The 'guestworkers' were a new form of contract labour, not expected to settle or bring in dependants. Their profitability was enhanced by a supposed lack of need for social investments in housing, schools and the like. But even ten years ago there was evidence that temporary migration was going to turn into permanent settlement – even in countries like Switzerland and West Germany, which were vehemently opposed. Moreover (and this was the main thesis of a study carried out by myself and Godula Kosack at the beginning of the 1970s), the function of both groups of immigrants for the capitalist system was the same: to provide a cheap and flexible source of mainly unskilled labour, during a period of rapid industrial expansion, and to facilitate the creation of economic and social divisions within the working class.[1]

The 1970s indeed witnessed the expected change from temporary migration to settlement. But parallel to this convergence in the two forms of migration a more important change was taking place: the

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function of immigrant workers for capitalism was changing throughout western Europe. The relatively labour-intensive expansion was at an end; the capital accumulation made possible by the exploitation of immigrant labour (together with other factors) now ushered in a new phase of restructuring of the world economy. The policy of the most advanced sectors of capital was now to export capital (and jobs) to low-wage countries, rather than to import labour.[2] This meant a decline in industrial employment in western Europe, which was intensified in the mid-1970s by the decline in growth, starting with the so-called 'oil-crisis', and in the late 1970s by the rapid introduction of micro-processors.[3] The reaction throughout western Europe was to stop the import of labour and to start repatriation schemes. But although right-wing parties have demanded the repatriation of all immigrants, this has not been the strategy of big capital nor of the governments concerned. A reduced and stabilised immigrant population still has a vital socio-economic function for them: that of a social buffer at the lowest level of society, absorbing the worst impact of restructuring, and helping to cushion higher strata against it. But immigrants can only have this function if legal, social and economic pressures keep them collectively in an underclass position. This is the task of measures restricting entry, labour market and civil rights. In turn, such discriminatory measures lead to responses from immigrant workers in the form of economic and political struggle. So, throughout western Europe we see a process of class formation before our eyes.

The present article will examine the transition from temporary migration to permanent settlement in West Germany, and then look at one aspect of class formation: the way the education system works to guarantee that second-generation immigrants will remain at the lowest occupational and social levels of society.

How government policies turned temporary into permanent migration – while claiming the opposite

The migration of workers to West Germany started later than to most other countries, but soon developed into the most rapid and highly-organised movement of labour anywhere in postwar Europe. The number of foreign workers rose from 95,000 in 1956 to 1.3 million in 1966, dipped to 900,000 during the recession of 1966-8, and then shot up to 2.5 million by the summer of 1973. Most workers were recruited in their home countries by branches of the German Federal Labour Office.[4] At first, migration was regarded as a transitory necessity, and government policies were designed to keep it that way, by preventing entry of dependants and severely restricting workers' rights. But by the mid-1960s labour demand was soaring throughout western Europe. Regulations were relaxed to attract foreign workers and to increase

their flexibility and mobility. It became easier for a worker to bring dependants to West Germany after a certain period. At the same time, many families found their own way of re-uniting by getting the second partner recruited as a worker and bringing in children as 'tourists'. By 1971, two million foreign workers had about one million non-working dependants with them. Of course, population structure still showed over-representation of young working males and the rate of activity was 66 per cent, compared with about 40 per cent for Germans. Many migrants still came for a few years only, before returning home to set up a small service enterprise, buy land or build a house. But members of this group often re-emigrated to West Germany after a while, when their businesses failed. A second time, they were more likely to bring dependants, having lost their illusions about the chances of escaping poverty in the underdeveloped south.

Then, in November 1973, the Federal Government suddenly issued the *Ausländerstopp*, an administrative order banning all further immigration of workers from non-EEC countries.* The explanation given for this was the falling demand for labour due to the 'oil-crisis'. The real underlying reasons (as mentioned above) were the growing trend to export labour-intensive production processes to low-wage countries in the Third World, and the changes in the production process beginning to result from the introduction of microprocessors. Further factors which played a part in West Germany were: the costs and tensions caused by the growing social requirements for foreign workers' families; and fears of political conflicts resulting from the leading part played by foreign workers in the strike wave of the summer of 1973.[5]

During the 1973-5 recession, the number of foreign workers fell by over half a million. Since the *Ausländerstopp* remained in force during the following period of expansion, the employment of foreign workers

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*Free movement of workers within the European Community was laid down by the Treaty of Rome and came into force in 1968. It was not affected by the *Ausländerstopp* of 1973. Free movement of workers has taken two forms: 1. Mobility of highly-skilled workers in all directions in the Community. 2. Movement of unskilled workers from the periphery to the core of the industrial areas. In particular there has been large-scale movement of Italian workers to France, Germany and Belgium. However, movement within the Community is much less in volume than movement to the industrial areas of the Community from outside. For instance, less than one-quarter of foreign workers in West Germany are Community nationals. Since the *Ausländerstopp* of 1973, Community nationals have become a more mobile and flexible source of unskilled or semi-skilled labour than non-Community workers. The southern Italians are being increasingly joined by Irish and British workers. The latter include growing numbers of British citizens of Asian origin, who are attracted by the better wages and employment prospects in West Germany. Fear that free movement of labour would lead to a new influx of Turks has been the reason why the West German Government has opposed the admission of Turkey to the European Community.

became stabilised at just under two million (1,869,000 in mid-1978). But the foreign population did not drop, for existing legislation gave more and more of the workers the right to bring in dependants. In terms of numbers, the departing workers were replaced by the wives and children (and sometimes parents) of the workers who remained. The foreign population became stabilised at just below four million (3,981,000 on 30 June 1978).[6] The rate of activity declined to about 50 per cent, and demands for housing, education and social facilities rose accordingly. The *Ausländerstopp* had changed the whole pattern of migration to West Germany. By keeping out new single workers, it accelerated the tendency towards normalisation of family structures. Moreover, many workers who would previously have remained only a few years and then returned to the country of origin decided to remain, for the chance of a second migration in case of failure at home was now blocked. Such workers became long-term settlers and brought in dependants. Altogether, the 1973 *Ausländerstopp* can be compared with the effects of the 1962 Immigration Act in Britain, in making temporary migration permanent without intending to.

Another piece of ill-conceived and discriminatory legislation reinforced this tendency. The SPD-FDP Government's tax reform, which came into force on 1 January 1975, granted considerable increases in child benefits. However, these were not to be paid to foreign workers whose children remained in the country of origin. This group was to receive only the scale of benefits they would be entitled to in those countries – which meant little or nothing. Despite protests from trade unions and foreign workers' organisations, the Government remained firm, hoping to save about DM 1000m per year.[7] The predictable result was that many children who had previously been looked after by grandparents in Turkey, Yugoslavia, etc., were now brought to West Germany. Sometimes the grandparents came too.

A third measure compounded the effects of the *Ausländerstopp* and the tax reform: the *Stichtagregelung* laid down that foreign workers' dependants who entered West Germany after the 'key date' of 30 November 1974 were not subsequently to be granted a labour permit.[8] This meant that immigrants' children entering after this date would receive compulsory education, but would not be permitted to take up employment upon completing school. The idea was obviously to force the children who had been brought in because of the tax reform to leave the country again when they became adult. But the actual effect was rather different: many of the young people concerned were unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin, and remained in Germany as 'non-persons' – entitled neither to work nor social security benefits. The likely results of such a situation are clear: barred from any legitimate ways of earning a living, such youths have no choice but to take illegal (and highly exploitative) employment or resort to crime.

By 1976 it was evident that West Germany's policy towards foreign workers had become a contradictory shambles. What had started off as a carefully organised movement of short-term workers had turned into large-scale family immigration, of long-term and probably permanent nature. The measures taken to control the movement had failed, often achieving the opposite of what was intended. The West German economy, after benefiting for fifteen years from the profits made on relatively low-paid workers, whose dependants were abroad, was now faced with the social costs of integrating a large immigrant population. And there was growing fear of social and political tensions if these costs were not met. At the same time, slowing economic growth and increasing international competition made the cutting of public expenditure imperative.

In this situation the Federal Labour Minister in 1976 convened a Commission, representing Federal and *Länder* governments, unions and employers, with the urgent task of reviewing migration policies. Its report, issued in February 1977, started by declaring: 'The Federal Republic is not a country of immigration' – despite the obvious fact that it had long since become one. It called for the maintaining of the *Ausländerstopp* and the *Stichtagregelung*, although the 'key date' for the latter was to be extended to 31 December 1976. Apart from this it proposed a 'dual strategy' consisting of, on the one hand, measures designed to increase the legal, social and economic integration of immigrants, and, on the other, measures designed to encourage them to go back home.[9]

The structure of the immigrant population

Government migration policies, such as the 'dual strategy' mentioned above, are designed to maximise the profitability of foreign workers, while minimising the social costs. Inevitably they are reflected in the composition and structure of the immigrant population, with regard to nationality, sex, age and family size. Hence, as Table 1 shows, the greatest proportion of immigrants come from the most disadvantaged sending countries.

Table 1 *Selected immigrant groups by sex on 30 September 1978 (thousands)*

	All immigrants	Turks	Yugoslavs	Italians	Greeks	Spaniards
Male	2,320	693	348	357	163	110
Female	1,662	473	262	215	143	79
Total	3,981	1,165	610	573	306	189

Source: *Statistisches Jahrbuch für die Bundesrepublik Deutschland 1979.*

The Turks form by far the largest national group among immigrants in West Germany. Moreover, this group is still increasing, both absolutely and proportionally, while the other national groups have declined slightly in recent years. The Turks now form 29 per cent of the immigrant population, compared with only 26 per cent in 1975.

Table 1 also indicates the persisting imbalance of the sexes: 58 per cent of immigrants are male and 42 per cent female. This applies to all main groups, but is most pronounced for the Italians (62 per cent males), indicating continuing temporary labour migration for these European Community nationals.

An important indication of the trend towards permanent migration is given by statistics on length of stay, which show that more than 60 per cent of immigrants had been in West Germany for over six years in mid-1978. Twenty-six per cent had actually been resident over ten years. This applies to all main immigrant nationalities.[10]

Moreover, as Table 2 shows, the age structure of the immigrant population is a direct result of a policy of organised recruitment. Two

Table 2   *Immigrants by age on 30 September 1978*

	Thousands	*%*
Under 6	393	11
6 – 9	248	7
10 – 14	246	7
15 – 17	121	3
18 – 20	151	4
21 – 34	1,280	34
35 – 44	770	21
45 – 54	347	9
55 – 64	116	3
65 and over	79	2

Source: *Statistisches Jahrbuch für die Bundesrepublik Deutschland 1979.*

features stand out: the predominance of 21 to 45-year-olds (over half the immigrant population) and the large number of 1 to 6-year-olds. The first feature indicates the economic benefit of recruiting foreign workers – most are in the most productive age group, and pension demands are far away. But of course, this is also the most fertile age group, which is one reason for the large number of those under 6. Besides, most immigrants come from peasant societies, where, for obvious socio-economic reasons, large families are still the norm. The move to an urban industrialised society should in the long run bring the fertility level close to that of the indigenous population. However this tendency is countered by the repatriation aspect of the 'dual strategy': by undercutting any trend towards 'integration', and hence keeping

immigrants in a permanent state of insecurity, this policy reinforces existing social and cultural patterns, in particular that of regarding a large family as a form of insurance for old age. So immigrant birth rates have remained high in recent years, while German birth rates have fallen dramatically. The children of immigrants* form a growing proportion of the births in inner-city areas, where the immigrants are concentrated. In recent years, one-third of all births in cities like Stuttgart, Frankfurt and Duisburg have been to foreign parents, a situation which has fed the racism and xenophobia which helped create it in the first place.

At present, as Table 2 shows, there are 494,000 immigrant children aged 6 to 15, which is the age group subject to compulsory education in West Germany. They make up 5.8 per cent of this age group. But, for all the reasons mentioned above, the foreign proportion of children aged under 6 is far higher – namely 10.8%.[11] These are the children who will be entering compulsory education in the next few years, so that the proportion of children locked into a permanent second-class status is going to almost double.

Policies on the education of immigrant children

Education policy is the responsibility of the *Länder* governments rather than the Federal Government, which has merely a coordinating role. *Länder* measures have varied considerably. Since the large-scale entry of foreign children was neither anticipated nor officially desired, nothing was done to prepare for it in advance. In the early years it was not even clear whether schooling should be compulsory for them. There was also confusion as to whether the governments of the countries of origin should be permitted to set up national schools – a course much favoured by authoritarian regimes such as those of Spain, Greece and Turkey, as a means of political and cultural control. By the late 1960s most of the thirteen *Länder* had made attendance at German schools compulsory, and were beginning to take special measures to tackle the problems of foreign children. But it was not until 1971 that a general policy for the whole Federal Republic was proposed in a Decision of the Standing Conference of Education Ministers[12] (a consultative body linking Federal and *Länder* authorities). Policy was revised and up-dated by a new Decision in 1976,[13] although it remained unchanged in most substantial points. The 1976 Decision laid down the following policy aim.

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*Unlike Britain, where children born to immigrants are automatically entitled to British citizenship, children born in West Germany to foreign parents do not gain the right to West German citizenship. Some consequences of this will be discussed below.

It is a question of enabling foreign pupils to learn the German language and to obtain German school-leaving certificates, as well as allowing them to keep and improve their knowledge of their mother tongue. At the same time, educational measures should contribute to the social integration of the foreign pupils during the duration of their stay in the German Federal Republic. They also assist in the maintenance of their linguistic and cultural identity.[14]

Again we see the 'dual strategy' already noted in the case of general policies towards immigrants. Schools are to help foreign children integrate into West German society, and yet at the same time to prepare them for return to their countries of origin. Accordingly, two main types of special classes have been established:

(a) Preparatory classes, to give intensive language instruction to prepare foreign pupils to join normal school classes.

(b) Classes in the mother tongue, as a compulsory part of school curriculum for foreign pupils, with the aim of maintaining knowledge of the language and culture of the country of origin.

Immigrant children in education

Nurseries

Apart from language, the main problem for immigrant children on commencing school is the extreme difference in the form of socialisation experienced at home and at school. Foreign children share the same difficulties as other working-class children, but have further grave problems of their own. Their background is characterised by two factors: first, pre-industrial forms of production and social organisation, and the associated norms with regard to behaviour, sexual roles, family structures and religion; secondly, the crisis and incipient dissolution of these pre-industrial patterns in the face of economic, political and social change (migration itself being one element of this crisis).[15] The socialisation conditions of immigrant children are therefore both contradictory and insecure. The gravity of this problem varies according to duration of stay in West Germany. Foreign children born there are torn between two cultures, but do at least have the chance of learning the language and getting used to the society before starting school. Children who arrive just before starting school (which is common, for parents often leave them with relatives in the country of origin until they reach school age) are faced with a sudden confrontation between two cultures. At the same time they have to learn a new language and get used to a new home situation with parents and siblings they may hardly know. Children who do not arrive until an even later age have the greatest difficulty. Whether they have attended school at

home or not, they have great problems in adapting to school in Germany. They are likely to get stuck in preparatory classes with much younger children, and their chances of successfully completing school are very slim.

Nurseries could have a very important function for foreign children born in West Germany or coming at an early age, reducing their educational disadvantage by helping to prepare them for the demands of school. But unfortunately the proportion of immigrant children who go to nurseries is low. On average, 60-80 per cent of 3-6-year-olds attend nurseries in West Germany, but various surveys have shown that the rate of attendance for foreign children is on average only half or less than the rate for German children.[16]

Why do those children who would benefit most from nurseries not attend them? One reason lies in the unfamiliarity of foreign parents with this institution, which is much less widespread in their countries of origin. They mistrust the nurseries and see little use in them. Another factor is the concentration of immigrant families in inner-city areas, where nurseries are least adequate, both in quantity and quality. Moreover, many foreign workers may be unable or unwilling to pay the fees charged by nurseries. Procedures for obtaining free places may be unknown or too complicated for them. Whatever the reason, the fact remains that many immigrant children under 6 are left alone all day. Others are cared for by elder sisters, whose own education is hindered. Some are cared for by unqualified child-minders, usually of the same nationality.

Even where immigrant children do attend nurseries, little is done to deal with their special difficulties. There are a few special nurseries — national, bilingual or multi-lingual — which are trying out various strategies for the cultural integration of immigrant children. But the overwhelming majority of immigrant children who attend nurseries go to normal ones, designed to meet the needs of German children.[17] It is extremely rare for the staff of these nurseries to receive any special training on the problems of foreign children, and there are virtually no special educational programmes to deal with the situation. In other words: nurseries do not have much of a 'compensatory' effect in dealing with the language and socialisation difficulties of immigrant children. Since the basic dispositions required for success at school are largely provided (or not provided) in pre-school socialisation, most foreign children start compulsory education with a severe handicap.

Preparatory classes

Foreign children take the same tests on starting school as German children. If their knowledge of German is thought to be adequate, they start in normal classes. If not, they enter a special preparatory class (*Vorbereitungsklasse*), designed to give intensive instruction in the

German language and at the same time to give instruction in the normal German curriculum. Transition to normal schooling is supposed to take place as soon as the pupil is adequately prepared for it – as officially laid down, within two years. The class teacher in preparatory classes is generally a compatriot of the children, while German language is supposed to be taught by a German.

But the realisation of this policy has met with considerable problems. The transition from preparatory to normal classes is rarely as rapid and smooth as it should be. The causes for this lie both in the cultural problems of migration and in the socio-economic position of foreign children and teachers in West Germany.

As already pointed out, a quarter or more of all school beginners are foreign in many cities. There are districts of industrial towns where the proportion is as high as 80 per cent. Putting children in a one-nationality class may seem an easy solution to many authorities. Sometimes all foreign pupils in a town are collected in one school. This may involve bussing children in from outlying areas. The rationale for this course is that centralisation allows the provision of specialised language and remedial facilities, but frequently this appears to be window dressing. Another explanation is German parents' fear that their children may be at a disadvantage in schools where most pupils are foreign. Inevitably, one-nationality classes and '*Gastarbeiter*' schools tend to become ghettoes, which are hard to leave.

Moreover, the language problems of immigrant children are often far more complex than is realised. Their mother tongue is often not the main language of the country concerned – this applies for instance to Kurds from Turkey, or Slovenians and Macedonians from Yugoslavia. Even where the language is nominally the same, a child's first medium of communication may be a dialect which is very distant from the official language: an Anatolian child may hardly understand Turkish, or a Sicilian child may have great difficulty with Italian. So the immigrant child entering a preparatory class may be confronted with a teacher of the same nationality, whose speech he cannot understand. At the same time, immigrant pupils are expected to learn High German from a German teacher (if they are lucky enough to have one). Yet communication with local children may be a much greater priority, and this involves not High German, but a very different local dialect, like Hessisch, Bayrisch or Berlinerisch. Many immigrant children have in effect to cope with four different languages (or even five in the case of Turkish children attending Koran school, where they are taught in Arabic).

Difficulties in preparatory classes are further increased by the wide age range that is often found in them. This is partly because children who are not regarded as suitable for transition to a normal class may remain in the same class for several years. Moreover, pupils newly

arrived from abroad are usually put in the first class whatever their age. A 6-year-old Turk born in Frankfurt may find her or himself sitting next to a 9-year-old straight from Anatolia. For instance, an educational social worker in Frankfurt reports working in classes ranging from 6-9 and 7-12-years-old.[18] Even the best teacher is likely to have trouble maintaining discipline and keeping all children interested in such varied classes. This situation hampers learning the German language and also makes it very hard to keep pace with the normal curriculum, so that when a pupil does finally make the transition to a normal class, she or he will probably experience great difficulties. In fact, many children end up being sent back to preparatory classes.[19]

An important cause of the problems related to the preparatory classes is the insecure and contradictory position of the foreign teachers who teach in them. Since the use of foreign teachers is one of the main planks of West Germany's 'dual strategy' towards immigrant children, it is worth looking at the problem in more detail. It is important to note that tens of thousands of teachers have come to West Germany from countries like Turkey, Spain and Greece – not as teachers but as manual workers. They have been forced to migrate by economic need and political persecution.[20] It might be thought that members of this group would be the best recruits for teaching their compatriots in German schools, for they are usually fluent in the language and have the knowledge and experience necessary to help in the social integration of immigrant children. But most West German education authorities have been unwilling to employ such teachers. Instead, they have left recruitment to the authorities of the countries of origin. These, in turn, have rejected use of the teachers already in Germany, whose political loyalty is suspect. They have recruited politically reliable teachers in the home country. The amount of special training they receive before coming to Germany is generally negligible, so that many foreign teachers speak little German and have little knowledge of German society upon commencing work. Nor have the West German education authorities provided training facilities to prepare foreign teachers for their specialised and difficult task.

Foreign teachers are paid neither according to their qualifications (which may vary widely), nor according to their actual work as teachers. Employed specifically to teach *Gastarbeiter* children, their contracts are inferior in both pay and conditions to those of German teachers. Unlike German teachers, who are usually granted tenure for life, immigrant teachers have no security of employment whatsoever. They appear to themselves and their pupils as 'second-class teachers for second-class pupils'.[21] This insecure status certainly hampers the success of foreign teachers in integrating their pupils into the German school system. In fact, an unwitting premium is put on failure to meet declared policy aims: a foreign teacher who successfully prepares his

pupils for entry to normal German classes is working himself out of a job. As soon as the number of pupils in his preparatory class falls below twelve, the class may be dissolved and he may be dismissed. This is specifically stated in foreign teachers' contracts of employment.[22] In recent years, the insecurity of foreign teachers has grown. With rising unemployment among German teachers, there is talk of giving them special training to replace foreign teachers in preparatory classes. Whatever the educational merits of such a course, its present effect is to worsen the already difficult relations between German and foreign teachers.

Statistics on immigrant children's length of schooling in preparatory classes appear to be unobtainable, but there is considerable evidence to indicate that very few children manage the transition after just one year. Many children stay far longer than even two years in preparatory classes. Often the term 'preparatory class' is just a euphemism for permanent one-nationality classes – ghettoes within the schools – which prevent rather than facilitate integration into normal classes. As the Frankfurt branch of the Teachers' Union (GEW) has stated:

> From this provisory solution, in the meantime an illegitimate but firmly constituted national school system has become established. This ends for the majority of foreign pupils – namely 65% – without a school-leaving certificate.[23]

Many immigrant pupils spend all of their primary schooling and even some of their secondary-school career in one-nationality classes. Their chance of integrating into normal classes and meeting the requirements of the West German curriculum after this are extremely small. The 1976 Decision tacitly recognised this by legalising permanent one-nationality classes – tacit acceptance of a ghetto situation for immigrant pupils.

Normal classes

Clearly, those immigrant children who start their school career in normal classes together with German children, or at least enter such classes after a relatively short period in a preparatory class, have the best chances of educational success. But such children should not be regarded as being without educational problems. They still have language problems as well as all the difficulties mentioned above with regard to contradictory patterns of socialisation. Overcoming these problems requires special attention on the part of their teachers – in other words some sort of 'positive discrimination' to compensate for their educational disadvantages. But this is all too seldom available.

Indeed, West German teachers find themselves confronted with a task for which they are ill-equipped. Immigrant children tend to be concentrated in areas where schools are old and overcrowded. In such inner-city areas, foreign pupils may be more than a quarter of the total

number in a class, even though there is an official norm restricting the proportion of foreign children in a class to 15 per cent. For instance, the Minister of Education of Lower Saxony stated in 1978 that this *Land* had 203 primary school classes and 96 secondary modern classes with over 20 per cent foreign children.[24] (By contrast there were no grammar or middle school classes with such high proportions of foreign children.) Most German teachers find it difficult to cope in a large class with several different nationalities.

The widely varying ages of the children transferred from preparatory classes does not help matters. A 10-year-old in a class of 7-year-olds presents enormous problems for the teacher. Bored by the childish subject matter, and ashamed at being put on a level with much younger pupils, the 10-year-old is likely to assert him or herself through aggression and disruption. The whole climate in the class may be damaged by such situations, so that the most liberal teacher may begin to feel hostile towards immigrant pupils. Above all, the teacher simply does not have time to devote himself to the specific problems of each immigrant pupil. There are thirty other pupils who require attention. Moreover, German parents are likely to put pressure on teachers at 'parents' evenings', insisting that the teacher should concentrate on their children and not allow them to be held back by too much concern for foreign children in the class.[25]

Very little has been done to prepare teachers for the task of teaching foreign pupils. Until very recently, teachers' training colleges did not provide any special instruction on this topic. Today, there are some courses, but they are still relatively rare. Nor has much been done to provide special teaching material and aids related to immigrant children's situation. There also appears to be little communication between German teachers in normal classes and the foreign teachers in preparatory classes, so that coordination of methods and subject matter rarely occurs – even within one and the same school.

Classes in the mother tongue

The evidence given above indicates that the official aim of securing integration and equality of opportunity for immigrant children in the West German education system has not been achieved. Have the authorities been more successful with their other declared aim of preparing children for return home and for re-integration into the school systems of the countries of origin? This is the task of the special classes set up to maintain fluency in the mother tongue as well as to give basic instruction in the history, geography and culture of the home country. Such classes have been set up widely and appear to be available to most children of the main immigrant nationalities. They are financed by the West German authorities, have a duration of up to five hours per week, are compulsory and take place outside normal school hours,

putting additional strain on the children, taking up the time required for homework, and so hindering further their normal schooling.

There appears to be little attempt made to coordinate the content of the mother-tongue classes with normal schooling. The foreign teachers generally use the curricula and textbooks of the country concerned, which would appear desirable from the point of view of aiding re-integration later on. On the other hand, it is questionable whether educational contents which are irrelevant to a child's actual situation can lead to successful learning. There is a need for special teaching material relating, for instance, to the situation of being the child of a Turkish worker in West Germany.

It is above all the mother-tongue classes which form a focus for the battle for ideological control of immigrant children. Authoritarian regimes try to select the teachers and influence what they teach. Teachers who are unwilling to conform may have their passports taken away by the Consulate and then be reported to the Aliens' Police, which may lead to deportation. The Demirel Government of the early 1970s forced Turkish teachers to use militarist texts.[26] The Greek Junta employed threats and violence to compel teachers to use textbooks glorifying the fascist dictatorship.[27] Turkish parents are frequently put under official pressure to send their children to Koran schools in addition to the normal mother-tongue classes. Such Koran schools are not only bearers of religion and culture, but also often play a reaction-ary political role, frequently acting as recruiting bases for the terrorist Grey Wolf organisation. Altogether, it is doubtful whether mother-tongue classes may be regarded as neutral purveyors of national culture. Immigrant trade unionists and political militants may find them a place of bitter conflict, which is carried out at the expense of their children.

There appears to be little hard evidence with regard to the success of the mother-tongue classes in preparing children for re-integration in the country of origin, although there is room for doubt as to their efficacy. What is certain, however, is that they detract from school success within the German system. As more and more children seem likely to remain in West Germany permanently, the role of the mother-tongue classes needs re-examining.

The consequences
The inadequacy of official measures concerning the schooling of immi-grant children leads to severe educational disadvantage. This takes three basic forms.

First, under-attendance at school. Despite compulsory education many foreign children go to school only for a few years or not at all. To start with, some parents bring in their children illegally as 'tourists' because they cannot get permission for them to enter as dependants.

These children cannot go to school; to do so would mean deportation. For obvious reasons there are no statistics on this group, but there is no doubt of its existence. But many children and young people who are legally resident do not go to school either. If we compare the school attendance of West German and foreign children we find that 86 per cent of West Germans aged 6 to 18 were at primary or secondary schools. But the figure for foreigners was only 70 per cent.[28] While this cannot be taken as an accurate measure of under-attendance, because of the different age-structures of the German and foreign populations, it certainly does indicate educational underprivilege.

Secondly, under-representation in the upper levels of selective education. West Germany still has a tripartite system (apart from a few experimental comprehensives). In mid-1978 4.4 per cent of all pupils at West German primary and secondary schools were foreigners. Their share was 6 per cent in primary and secondary modern schools (*Hauptschule*), but only 1.4 per cent in middle schools (*Realschule*) and 1.5 per cent in grammar schools (*Gymnasium*).[29] Children of foreign workers are rarely to be found in higher education, and are also very considerably under-represented in all types of occupational training. Where they do attend occupational training establishments, it is usually the general type (*Berufsschule*), which provides general instruction not leading to a useful qualification.[30]

Thirdly, underachievement at school. Immigrant pupils are severely hampered by socialisation and language problems. The preparatory classes fail to compensate for this and do not even permit pupils to keep up with curricula requirements. Immigrant pupils are generally years behind their age-standard when (and if) they are transferred to normal classes. If they leave school at 15 they lose several years of schooling. It is possible to apply to stay on longer, but many immigrant parents do not know of this possibility or are unable to make use of it for economic reasons. So not only do most young immigrants not manage to get into grammar or middle schools (the majority do not even reach the leaving standards of the secondary modern school), but it is officially admitted that two-thirds of immigrant school leavers do not obtain the school-leaving certificate of the secondary modern (equivalent to British CSE).[31]

On the whole, it is doubtful whether West German schools provide most immigrants either with useful knowledge or with formal qualifications likely to lead to success in the occupational system. To many immigrants, this type of schooling appears to be of little value. So many children attend sporadically or not at all. Teenage girls are kept at home to look after younger siblings, and boys are sent out to work long before school-leaving age – illegally and at exploitative wages. Even those who attend regularly are unlikely to obtain a school-leaving certificate. Since this is the minimum requirement for any sort of occupational

training or skilled work, most second-generation immigrants are condemned to a life of insecure unskilled labour alternating with unemployment. No wonder that schooling for immigrant workers' children has been widely characterised as 'education for bilingual illiteracy'.[32]

The social time-bomb

In recent years, journalists and social workers in West Germany have started referring to second-generation immigrants as the 'social time-bomb'. This term is mainly used with regard to the *Stichtagregelung* (see page 372 above) which denies a labour permit to young people who entered West Germany after 30 November 1974 as dependants. Barred from legal employment, it was obvious that this group was compelled to resort to illegal work or crime to exist. The spectre of muggings and disorder conjured up by the press caused the Government to move the *Stichtag* (key date) to 31 December 1976. At the time of writing there is much discussion in official circles of removing the *Stichtag* altogether. Will the abolition of the *Stichtag* defuse the 'social time-bomb'?

The answer to this question must be 'no', for the *Stichtag* is merely one of a series of discriminatory policies which determine the position of second-generation immigrants. This article has concentrated on education, describing the failure of the official 'dual strategy', which claims to give immigrant pupils equality of opportunity in the West German educational system, while at the same time preparing them for repatriation. Why has this policy failed? The ostensible reason is its inherent contradiction, which puts an unbearable strain on both pupils and teachers, combined with insufficient resources of finance, personpower, training and research. But to grasp the underlying reason one must ask: does the West German ruling class really want to grant equality of opportunity to second-generation immigrants? Catastrophic underachievement in education serves the interests of employers and government because it helps keep second-generation immigrants in the lowest stratum of the working class: the stratum of unskilled and unqualified workers, who are going to bear the brunt of the restructuring of the capitalist economy in the coming decades.

The role played by the education system in the formation of a new underclass corresponds with the other main aspects of immigrant workers' socio-economic position in West Germany (which is in turn comparable with the position of immigrants in other western European countries). To get a complete picture of the current process of class formation we would have to examine:

1. The labour market, which immigrant workers have entered at the lowest level. Lack of education and training, as well as discrimination have kept them there. Now that employment and training opportunities

are tending to contract, immigrants find their prospects deteriorating. Low occupational status is both a cause of poor educational performance of the next generation, and a result of educational disadvantage in the past.

2. The housing and social situation of the immigrant population. It is necessary to examine the formation of national or multinational communities in inner-city and other areas and the social and economic relationships which develop in them. This includes the question of differentiation of sub-classes and their interaction with the general class system of West Germany. One tendency appears to be the development of an immigrant petit-bourgeoisie, which has the function of providing services (like the retail of national foods) but is also frequently parasitical and exploitive (landlords and labour-only sub-contractors).

3. The triple oppression implicit in the role of the working-class woman migrant. This is particularly pronounced in the case of Turkish women. The question of the function of traditional sex roles in the formation of immigrant communities needs consideration, as do changes in these roles through work, education and interaction with modern western European patterns.

4. The development of new types of culture. A Turk in West Germany should not be regarded as someone with either a (partial) Turkish or a (partial) German culture. New types of culture are evolving through migration, and these cannot be regarded as a mere sum of national cultures. There is talk of a general '*Gastarbeiterkultur*' in West Germany, but the concept of specific national-group cultures of migration seems more useful.

5. Policies with regard to residence and nationality. The present legal restrictions on immigrant workers are designed to guarantee maximum control and prevent any collective action against an underclass situation. This applies even to foreign workers' children born in West Germany. They have no right to West German citizenship, and are subject to all restrictions on labour market and civil rights. It is extremely difficult for immigrants to obtain naturalisation, or even permits guaranteeing long-term security of residence. Discriminatory labour market legislation helps keep immigrants in low status jobs, and the fear of deportation hangs over their heads, restricting militancy and causing permanent insecurity. Unemployment or a minor criminal offence are sufficient grounds for expulsion from the country – a particularly appalling threat for second-generation immigrants, who may have no links at all with their parents' country of origin.

6. The general nature of the relationship between the industrial core areas of European capitalism, and the peripheral Mediterranean areas. German capitalists have long regarded southern and south-eastern Europe as suppliers of cheap labour and raw materials and as consumers of industrial products. The form of the relationship has changed

386 Race & Class

over the last century, the import of labour being its particular charac-
teristic in the 1960s. This particular form is now in turn being super-
seded by new relationships, which will have important effects both on
the immigrant population in West Germany and on their countries of
origin.

So education is only part, albeit an important one, in the current
process of class formation in West Germany. It is this creation of a new
underclass which is the real 'social time-bomb'. Cosmetic operations to
remove particularly blatant pieces of discrimination (like the *Stichtag*)
will not change the basic position of immigrant workers in West
German society. Of course it would be easy to put a list of measures to
paper which would lead to basic changes and could start to bring about
real equality for immigrant workers. But this is a pointless exercise, for
it ignores the fact that the import of immigrant workers in the 1960s and
the creation of a new lower stratum of the working class in the 1970s
correspond to the interests of powerful sections of West Germany's
ruling class. In the years of rapid labour-intensive expansion of the
1960s, immigrant workers provided a relatively cheap and easily avail-
able source of flexible labour. Now that economic growth has slowed,
automation has cut labour needs, and capital export to low-wage
countries is replacing import of labour, the immigrant population is
taking on a new function: it forms a sort of social buffer, cushioning the
West German population against the worst effects of the restructuring
of the economy. The immigrants bear much of the brunt of change, but
educational underachievement appears to provide legitimation of this,
while lack of political rights helps to contain protest. Although large-
scale immigration has ceased, immigrants remain an important factor
in the class structure of West Germany – and of western Europe.

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social workers for work with immigrant children in Frankfurt am Main.

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31 Akpinar, etc., op. cit., p. 51.

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CHRIS SEARLE

Struggling against the 'Bandastan': an interview with Attati Mpakati

There is an almost total blackout of news on Malawi. What hard news we can get is mostly from exiles, ex-detainees who have fled the country. Foreign journalists and commentators are banned, as are many books and newspapers. The papers that are allowed to be sold are heavily censored – offending articles are simply inked out. After pressure from Callaghan, some foreign journalists were allowed in to report the 1978 elections (the first since 1962), but this was mere window-dressing. Documentation on Malawi is, therefore, extremely hard to come by – War on Want's report Tomorrow's Epidemic *has a short section on Malawi's tobacco industry, and Amnesty International produced a briefing paper on Malawi in August 1976, with subsequent references to the situation in their annual reports. And there is of course Legson Kayira's* The Detainee, *a review of which appears belatedly in this issue, p.429. We publish the interview which follows as a rare opportunity to expose current conditions.*

Dr Mpakati is currently the National Chairman of the Socialist League of Malawi (LESOMA). A former leader of the militant anti-colonial Nyasaland National Congress (proscribed by Banda in 1959), he was himself detained, and subsequently left Malawi in 1961. Several

attempts have been made to assassinate him. In February 1979 he was nearly killed in Maputo when his hands were blown off by a letter bomb. In an open letter to Banda after the assassination attempt, he told the self-proclaimed 'President for Life' that it was a waste of time spending the country's resources trying to kill him. The people were going to oppose him whether he, Mpakati, lived or died, and democracy, justice and socialism were now on the agenda for the future Malawi.

Chris Searle: What happened in Malawi just after Independence, and since then?

Attati Mpakati: Since Independence in 1964, our society has been misled, in the sense that foreign ideology, the ideology of private ownership, has been imposed and strengthened by the Banda regime.

Immediately after Independence there was a crisis when three ministers resigned from Banda's cabinet and three more were detained. One of the latter, Chipembere, managed to escape. With some 700 supporters, he tried to organise an uprising against Banda. But it was difficult for him because Malawi still wasn't a republic, the British were still in the country and the Governor-General – representing the Queen – supported Banda, his government and bureaucracy, the army and the police. So Chipembere lost the struggle, but it was a valuable fight which had developed from the people and in particular the peasants in the Fort Johnstone area where Chipembere came from. Many people had followed him into the bush and organised the revolt. They had taken one town but it had been `oo difficult for them to capture Zomba, Banda's headquarters. So the rebellion was suppressed and Chipembere himself managed to escape.

During that period Banda became more right-wing and shifted slowly towards the racists in South Africa and Rhodesia. This was a time when Banda was signing military agreements with South Africa and Rhodesia, and had even strengthened Malawi's relations with the Portugese colonial authorities in Mozambique.

It was then that American imperialism began to penetrate Malawi. When the United States saw there was a division in the cabinet, they took advantage of this and rescued Chipembere, who went to America with the support of the US Embassy. So we found we had two opposing forces in the country and America had made it look as if there was no 'left' opposition to Banda, but that the two forces were just fighting amongst themselves without any ideological involvement – so British and western interests would not have been sacrificed, whether Chipembere took power or fell. This was the strategy of the West, and they succeeded. For as soon as Chipembere was rescued from the bush, the British-led army killed many people, shot the freedom fighters and depopulated entire villages. Banda's Preventive Detention Act, allowing

him to detain anybody without trial, was planned and became law during this period of struggle. The British were involved in creating the detention bill, elected ministers like Chipembere were hunted like thieves while the Queen was still head of state.

It was during this period also that Banda turned the Youth Movement of the Malawi Congress Party into an armed group working for him. They became a private army in 1965 when the Malawi Young Pioneer Amendment Act became law. The police allowed the Young Pioneers to kill, rob, even to rape in public, without taking action. They just stood by, let them do the killing and then took the victims to hospital.

So much of this kind of brutality took place in the period following Independence, and future historians may well see it as a turning point both politically and socially in our country. For a hatred was generated during this time, whereby a man never trusted his friend, a wife never trusted her husband, and a son could be bribed by Banda's agents to betray his father. The whole social fabric of our society was being destroyed. It started from that time.

Since then, and over the last ten years, Banda has managed to extend the bureaucracy to serve his personal interest and dictatorship – to develop the infrastructure for repression. The Young Pioneers have become a separate army above the law, so much so that a policeman is now not allowed to arrest a Young Pioneer unless ordered by the President, who is the commander-in-chief of the movement. During the last decade we have lost thousands of our men, women and children, detention camps have been built in almost every district and Malawians have been killed, maimed and exiled. The Civil Service itself has been de-Africanised. Expatriates are doing the jobs of Malawians as Banda now distrusts all the blacks in the country. Even his own ministers and leaders of the Malawi Congress Party are not trusted. Even his cook is an expatriate from the UK!

Our situation in Malawi has gone from bad to worse. We suffered under the British, we suffered under Welensky's Central African Federation and now we are suffering even more terribly under Banda.

CS: Do the people still see Banda as he likes to promote himself, as the destroyer of the Federation and as the man who really established Malawi as an independent state?

AM: I don't think that the people believe that Banda is really the 'lion' that he claims to be. Remember, those gaily-dressed, smiling women who sing and dance for Banda are full-time professionals! He keeps a group of them in every town, lavishing them with houses and clothes. Now our people sing a real song about the lion – the 'mkango' in our language – that he has eaten people! And Banda is trying to ban this song because his security men have told him, 'Look,

this song is saying that you have eaten the people!' So the people don't believe that Banda destroyed the Federation any more, because he has not brought them freedom; he has just replaced foreign repression with his own repression. He even tries to smother our history by attempting to suppress the memory of the Chilembwe Rebellion of 1915. He wants the people to see the anti-colonial struggle as beginning and ending with himself. He refused permission to build a memorial to Chilembwe and moved the capital away from Chilembwe's district, Zomba, to the new site at Lilongwe.

In fact, the situation is worse than it used to be under colonialism. During the break-up of the Central African Federation it was the imperialist press that tried to project Banda as a hero. This was a tactic also of the British colonial authorities to sell Banda to Africa, to the world and in particular to the people of Malawi – to say, 'Here was the man bringing freedom!' But it was not Banda that brought an end to colonial rule. He did not organise the country; *we* organised the country long before Banda's arrival in 1958. We gave him the leadership. Chipembere handed him the leadership of the Nyasaland African Congress because he himself refused it. He was a younger man and he preferred an older man as leader. We didn't realise that Banda didn't share our aspirations then. We didn't know his way of thinking. Some of us said, 'but he is not an African, he is a Mzungu, a white man, he doesn't even eat our food, our msima.' People never thought that he would eventually turn our invitation into a personal dictatorship. The conference that we had which resolved to invite him was unanimous. What we didn't know was that he had already been canvassing support, planning and scheming even before his return. We never knew that he had met MacMillan and promised to help effect the dissolution of the Federation and become the leader of Nyasaland and prevent the spread of communism in that part of Africa. We were told, and we were very impressed when we heard it – although no one knew whether it was true – that he was a friend of N'krumah. What we didn't know was that he had been banned from practising medicine in Ghana! But we are a people of tradition. We respect old men and we thought that the adoption of Banda as our leader would get the support of the entire country, including the chiefs and the religious groups. Thus they would all support the Congress and Independence would come quickly and peacefully. That was our idea and it proved to be a historic error.

The British recognised this and tried to hi-jack our revolution by putting in the man who was in fact their own – Banda, who would faithfully serve their interests. The former Colonial Secretary Ian McCleod revealed as much in his review of Welensky's book. He stated that Welensky and his United Federal Party should support Banda's Malawi Congress Party, because Dr Banda would serve the expatriate and settler interest better than anybody else in Malawi. So the British

had a neo-colonial strategy for the country, and they were looking for a candidate, and they found all the right qualities in Dr Banda. He loves to be praised, and he wanted fame – so when the British newspapers praised Banda as the 'Man of 1960', the man who broke the Federation, this was part of a secret war against us that succeeded. But if Banda and Kaunda had come together at that time and said, 'we are not accepting separate independence without a guarantee of a multi-racial government in Southern Rhodesia', and had showed that they were determined to continue the struggle to achieve it, then we would not have the problems we now have in Zimbabwe.

So the Federation was dissolved at the expense of the six million blacks in Zimbabwe. We got Independence, Zambia got Independence – and Smith declared UDI in Rhodesia! (It had been difficult for Welensky to declare UDI for the entire Federation because of the pressure of the Nyasaland National Congress and UNIP in Zambia.)

Banda had been a betrayer not only of Malawi, but also of Zimbabwe, and future historians will find that, because he had not yet revealed himself as a puppet and a sell-out, he would have been accepted as one of the leaders of a modified Central African Federation.

CS: Could you describe the extent of the repression that now exists in Malawi?

AM: The repression is very heavy in Malawi and surprisingly nothing is being told outside its borders. Apparently the imperialists support Banda so they have not revealed what is happening inside the country. Also, very little news from outside comes into the country. The foreign press is heavily censored and both newspapers in Malawi are controlled by Banda. The *Daily Times* is government-owned and the *Malawi News* is controlled by the Malawi Congress Party.

Banda has killed many people. Our own estimates, although we don't have figures as such, show that Banda has killed more people than Idi Amin in Uganda. This has still to be verified after he has gone, but in Malawi almost everyone has a relative or friend who has either been killed or detained.

Some of Banda's detention camps are particularly notorious, like those at Mikuyu, Zomba and Dzereka. Here the detainees are beaten, brutalised and subjected to electric shock torture. There has been a period of mass murder in Blantyre. In 1969-70 records were kept which prove Banda was involved. No one was arrested for two years, then several ministers were implicated in these murders. However, Banda decided to sacrifice just one of them, the Minister for the Southern Region, Kuntamanje. He was detained, but he refused to give a statement unless Banda came to court, and we think he died in prison. If, however, the man is still alive, why hasn't the world tried to find out the truth about these murders? And Banda has killed others so that he is

kept safe, and no one talks. We know that Kuntamanje was tortured and kept in solitary confinement and we had also heard that he went crazy. Then there is also Arthur Chipembere who was arrested and tortured simply because he was his brother's brother. He is now permanently paralysed because of this.

There were more mass murders at Lilongwe, where the bodies were mutilated, and the police never took the trouble to find the criminals. Even now in Malawi, lots of people are quietly hanged in the bush – and no one takes a dead body if they find it there, for they are afraid that the police will say, 'how did you know this man has been killed?' and they will take them away. So you find bodies just rotting in the bush. Not long ago our party found a clandestine grave where people who had been murdered by Banda's men were buried. For when a man is arrested by the Young Pioneers the wife or son must not go to the police to ask about him, because they will not return. Often when someone is arrested by the Young Pioneers, they are kept for a few days without bread or water and then they are shot and buried. Wives of victims and detainees are forced to divorce their husbands to avoid suspicion and to avoid themselves being arrested as sympathisers of their husbands. There is such a backlog of condemned detainees that Banda has imported a hangman from Rhodesia to help him clear the waiting list. Many of the 'courts' are of a traditional kind where there is no accepted legal practice, and political cases automatically draw capital sentences.

Then there is exile, another form of repression. Students who come out of the country with a government scholarship never return after their studies. And those people who manage to cross the frontiers to Mozambique, Tanzania and Zambia never go back, because they know that to stay in Malawi is always to be on the waiting list. Any independent-thinking person in Malawi might be detained, killed or exiled.

CS: What are the conditions of the working people in Malawi, in particular those who work on the tea and tobacco plantations?*

AM: Firstly, there is no trade union movement representing the interests of the working people. There is just the Labour Ministry, hand-picked men who pretend to represent the trade unions. Strikes have been banned since colonial days, and in 1964, the year of Independence, our Trades Union Congress was proscribed. Then the General Secretary, Winston Chisiza, was murdered and his body dumped in Lake Malawi. Wages are very low and recent reports on the tea plantations say there is forced labour, where children of 10-12 years old

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*These are Malawi's major exports. Tourism (mainly from Rhodesia and South Africa) is also an important source of foreign revenue. The country's large deposits of coal and bauxite remain, as yet, unexploited.

are made to work and the minimum wage is fifteen pence a day. According to Dr Banda, 'Africans don't need more money because they don't eat butter.'

But an even worse sector is that of tobacco where there is even cruder exploitation. You find landowners, who are either expatriates or Malawi Congress Party officials, whose tenants are told to cultivate tobacco and sell only to the owner of the land at a price dictated by him. So the tenants find themselves indefinitely in debt because they can't repay the credits they take from the landowners. Sometimes they are unable to pay these back for ten or fifteen years. They have no food because they are forced only to grow tobacco.

This has caused real famine. There are large areas where people have nothing to eat. Land is scarce and Banda has adopted a method of 'land commercialism', where anybody who has money – particularly the Malawi Congress Party officials – have access to loans, and they soon obtain their land and tenants. So now we have in Malawi a *landless class* in what is a purely agricultural country. We need a progressive land policy whereby every family has a plot of land to cultivate their own maize to feed their family.

CS: What forces own and manage the country's economy, and what are the economic and political links which Malawi has with the racist regimes of Southern Africa?

AM: As Malawi is a former British colony, the British were the main actors within the economy. They controlled almost every sector; the tea plantations, the tobacco plantations, the agricultural processing companies – Barrow Tea and Tobacco, McConnell, the London-Blantyre Company, all had extensive lands to develop their tea and tobacco farms. There was also the Imperial Tobacco Company and its connection with the chemical industries of the UK. Most of these companies, like the British-South African Company, used to have their headquarters either in Rhodesia or South Africa. The Imperial Tobacco Company, for example, which buys all the tobacco grown in Malawi, has its headquarters in Umtali, Rhodesia. So there are Malawians being sent there to work for six months – they make the cigarettes there and then are sent back.

There is also the growth of Banda's personal interests in the economy. He has a firm, Press Trading, which owns all the country's printing facilities plus a chain of supermarkets and an import and export business. Through the Forfeiture Bill, he personally controls any property or interests belonging to a minister or opponent who leaves the country. In addition, he discourages and intimidates any competitors to his own chain of shops in the rural areas. Many of his would-be Asian competitors who owned small shops in the countryside have been pressured out of business by Banda's Young Pioneers.

Recently there have been other firms coming into the country, for example Italian firms like I. Conforzi Tea and Tobacco, and they also run their own transport network. Then there is South African penetration into the economy. They have recently built a big factory in Blantyre to manufacture fertilisers and explosives. It cost a million rand and was pre-fabricated in South Africa and taken by plane from Pretoria to be assembled in Blantyre. And the multinationals already have their eyes on Malawi's huge bauxite deposits, which are estimated at sixty million tons.

Then there is the tourist industry, particularly along the shores of Lake Malawi, much of which is South African-owned now. The tourist industry has often been used as a cover for South African security men posing as tourists. Some are just there for the black girls and others for information. Some BOSS agents are now training Banda's own security service. Recently the Mount Soche Hotel in Blantyre had two floors all occupied by South African armed security men disguised as tourists. Their aim was to track down Patriotic Front people crossing from Mozambique and Tanzania or African National Congress activists in Malawi. In 1976 they detained in Malawi a Zimbabwean politician named Nathan Shamuyaria, and it was only because news of this reached Dar-es-Salaam, and his comrades there contacted the OAU in Addis Ababa, that his release was secured by the Secretary-General. Only this prevented his being eliminated in Malawi.

The foreign involvement in Banda's bureaucracy is considerable. For a long time the Director of Information was a South African, and it is widely known that he arrested eighteen Malawian statisticians and detained them, replacing them with South Africans because he didn't like the [1972] census figures they produced. He cancelled the census because he didn't want the world to know how many people have been killed or gone missing in Malawi! The Malawian statisticians haven't been seen since. So many people have disappeared that no one knows the country's true population now.

So the political and economic links between Malawi and the racist regimes of Rhodesia and South Africa are still being developed and strengthened. One-third of Malawi's imports come from South Africa, and the South African government has paid the bills for many of Banda's prestige projects. Malawi exports huge labour power to South Africa, about 150,000 to 200,000 men per year. So Malawi's effect on South Africa is counter-revolutionary – not only are South Africans not in these jobs, but having Malawians working in the mines helps the regime's manipulation of the labour market and thus helps the apartheid system to continue.

South Africa has been pumping money into the Malawi Development Corporation, into the tourist sector and into the Commercial Bank, which used to be 80 per cent owned by Jorge Jardim [a Portuguese businessman]

Although Banda is opportunist enough to change his tack if Muzorewa should be consolidated in power in Zimbabwe, Banda has been supporting Sithole and has allowed him to keep his money in Malawi to train his men. Sithole favours the type of rule by personal dictatorship that Banda is using in Malawi, and would clearly like to emulate Banda in Zimbabwe if he ever came to power there. Banda himself sees Muzorewa as rather mild, and prefers the more 'bold' Sithole – even though it might mean war with Mozambique or open collaboration with South Africa.

Finally, much of Salisbury's sanction-busting was conducted for years through Malawi. Rhodesian tobacco was being channelled on to an international auction floor at Limbe, from where it was re-exported as a Malawian product.

CS: What is the nature of the health and education services now in Malawi?

AM: The medical services in the country are very bad and Banda, although he is a doctor, is not interested in improving the health of the people he is claiming to lead. I sometimes wonder what kind of a medical man he is. We still have no medical school to train doctors in the country, and we have a population of five million people. We have a university but there is no department of medicine.

There are private doctors for those few foreigners and Malawi Congress Party bureaucrats who can afford them, and Banda himself has full-time medical men waiting upon him twenty-four hours a day. When he moves from one district to another he has a mobile clinic because they expect him to collapse at any time. There are six nurses, and doctors from West Germany and South Africa attending him, he is not interested in serving the public health, only his own. The mass of the people are poor and have no access to medical facilities.

The same is true for education. Fifty per cent of school-age children in Malawi don't go because there are no schools for them. And those who go must pay high fees. There is more illiteracy now* than during the Federation or British rule. The majority of our intellectuals are either exiled or detained. There was a time when eighteen Malawians with PhDs were imprisoned. And in a country like Malawi for a person to go to university means a whole family must suffer, go without salt, without soap, to pay for one son only. The other children in the family would not even learn to write their names because there would be no more money. So to detain, kill or force into exile a man with a university degree is to condemn his entire family to poverty, because the university education of the son is seen as an investment for all the family, for his wage could buy things which the family could never otherwise afford – including paying the school fees for other children.

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*The official illiteracy rate is 95 per cent.

CS: What do you see as the strategic importance of Malawi in the present phase of the struggle in Southern Africa?

AM: I think that the left has certainly underestimated Malawi's importance to imperialism as far as the struggle in Southern Africa is concerned. The Patriotic Front has *today* signed a cease fire. If and when they win and take power in Zimbabwe, the South Africans are definitely going to dig deeper into my country. For having lost Rhodesia to the Patriotic Front, they will certainly try to entrench themselves in Malawi.

It is clear that Malawi is now being used to de-stabilise the whole area. In Mozambique, for example, Banda had cooperated with the Portuguese for a long time. In 1962, two years before Independence, he went to Lisbon and held long discussions with the Portuguese dictator, Salazar. They agreed that Salazar was to give him a part of Mozambique as long as Banda, after he became head of state in Malawi, would never accept FRELIMO passing through Malawi during their struggle against the Portuguese. Banda accepted this condition and blocked FRELIMO, capturing many FRELIMO combatants in Malawi and handing them over to the Portuguese. He surrendered the whole of Lake Malawi to the Portuguese during the war so that the Portuguese were controlling the lake and their gunboats were firing at and bombing both Tanzania and Mozambique. Even after Independence in Mozambique, Banda has continued to train the anti-FRELIMO hooligans and opponents of Samora Machel's government. They are being financed by Jorge Jardim, who came from colonial Mozambique and was given asylum by Banda in Malawi.

Moreover, some of the Rhodesian bombing raids on Zambia may be coming from Malawi. The Zambian Army see the bombers coming from the east, and Banda has allowed South Africa surveillance facilities at Lilongwe Airport. So they are already observing the whole area including the northern part of Mozambique around Nampula. We also know that there are some South Africans garrisoned at the Kamuza Barracks in Lilongwe. In addition, we know that there is a fluent Russian-speaker working for the BBC in Malawi who is monitoring the radio network, and who is particularly interested in what he can pick up about the FRELIMO Military School in Nampula, which has some Russian instructors. There have been some recent attempts to de-stabilise northern Mozambique by using Malawi as a base for cross-border attacks. Two of the saboteurs captured in Mozambique admitted publicly that they were trained in Malawi by South African and Portuguese instructors.

Banda does not allow either Patriotic Front or ANC militants to pass through Malawi, and he has been training Sithole's men to prepare them to provoke a civil war after the independence of Zimbabwe.

All this proves how important Malawi is to western imperialism.

CS: Could you describe the main orientations of the Socialist League of Malawi (LESOMA)? How do you keep the flame of opposition alive in Malawi in the face of such repression from Banda?

AM: Our immediate objective is to struggle for human rights and democracy in Malawi, and then prepare the way for socialism. We are a socialist party and we intend to implement and apply socialist theories by bringing the means of production under state control. But this would be a second phase, after fighting against Banda's dictatorship and achieving democracy in Malawi. Human rights and democracy are something our people have never known! They do not know what it is to live in a free country. For in Malawi we already have an unwritten apartheid. A worker who earns fifteen pence a day cannot go to a hotel, he can't afford it. Only the expatriates and a few party officials and ministers have that kind of money and have access to social services.

We accept many tendencies in the country into our movement, as long as they are opposed to the Banda dictatorship and are prepared to join in the struggle for human rights and the creation of the peaceful, prosperous and democratic Malawi which is our goal. So our support is broadly-based, from peasants and workers to intellectuals, and we are confident that if only there were freedom of speech in Malawi and if we had five or six months of peace without the intimidation which the Malawi Congress Party uses to recruit its membership, then we could win elections, even within the bourgeois framework.

Internationally, we are recognised and supported by most progressive governments. I live in Mozambique and my journey to London with my family for medical treatment was paid for by the Mozambican government. Our secretariat is in Dar-es-Salaam and in Zambia we have a division of our party. When I received the bomb in Maputo, another comrade in Lusaka received one too, but it was defused by the Zambian police. We are recognised by the Patriotic Front as a liberation movement, and also by the ANC of South Africa and SWAPO. We have been invited to many conferences, like the Anti-Apartheid Conference in Lisbon in 1977, the World Federation of Trade Unions Congress in Prague in 1978, the Anti-Imperialist Conference in Addis Ababa last year and the Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Organisation Conference in Lusaka this year, where LESOMA had five delegates. We have now created the Malawi Support Committee in the UK, and we hope that this is the beginning of the British labour movement's understandig of our case and support for us.

To keep the organisation alive and growing inside Malawi, against the type of repression I have outlined, is a difficult job. Since we started the party in 1974 we haven't been issuing statements and we have been avoiding journalists. What we wanted to create was a base inside the

country, to have our own cells there. We have been doing this for four years and we now have 15,000 members and supporters organised in clandestine LESOMA branches inside the army, the civil service, the university, the railways, plantations and villages, among the workers and peasants. We even have some support within the Malawi Congress Party itself. Some of our comrades have been arrested, and Banda himself only came to know about the existence of LESOMA after we had been operating more than a year.

The conditions are so abnormal in Malawi and the dictatorship is so pervasive that it is difficult for our people to come out into the open. In fact, we have been discouraging them from taking unilateral strikes and action, and have advised them to buy the Malawi Congress Party card so that they're able to move from one town to another. In Malawi, just to travel from one part of the country to another by bus – for example, from Zomba to Lilongwe – you must produce the party card which you have to buy every year. And you need this card also to buy food in the market or get a job! Many of the people have no money at all to buy the card, but we make sure that our members can afford to do this so they can travel around the country and talk to the people about our party.

Then outside the country we have the support of workers, students and refugees in exile in Mozambique, Tanzania and Zambia. We also have our supporters among the migrant miners and workers in Rhodesia and South Africa. When the Patriotic Front takes power in Zimbabwe we shall strengthen our influence amongst our people there, and we shall have a greater opportunity to try to liberate our country and join in the forces of the Front Line to help liberate our brothers in Namibia and South Africa.

CS: What prospects do you see for the progressive forces in Southern Africa at this very vital stage following the Zimbabwe Conference here in London? And how would a Malawi liberated from Banda's tyranny contribute to further progress there?

AM: Malawi now is an island, a reactionary island between the Indian and Atlantic oceans. But if the whole area, including Malawi, was a belt of progressive states, then South Africa could not use Malawi as a base for intervention and provocation. Then South Africa would be much more isolated and the fall of the racists would come about with much greater speed. But because of Malawi's present government, South Africa is attempting to create a union, a federation, a common market of reactionary states of Southern Africa. Malawi has been the best candidate for putting such an idea into practice. It is a true 'Bandastan'. If South Africa creates another 'Bandastan' in Zimbabwe, then that could also continue as a base for attempting to de-stabilise Mozambique. It would hold up the struggle for freedom in the whole of Southern Africa.

A liberated Malawi would give considerably more incentive to the forces of freedom in Southern Africa. Liberation struggles happening simultaneously in Zimbabwe, Namibia, Zaire as well as Malawi would divide the imperialist forces and give us all much stronger chances of winning freedom.
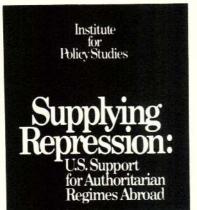
London,
21 December 1979

To the people of Zimbabwe

We honour your struggle
and your victory

Greetings
Race & Class

Notes and documents

Blueprint for Negro writing*

by Richard Wright

1 *The role of Negro writing: two definitions.*

Generally speaking, Negro writing in the past has been confined to humble novels, poems, and plays, prim and decorous ambassadors who went a-begging to white America. They entered the Court of American Public Opinion dressed in the knee-pants of servility, curtsying to show that the Negro was not inferior, that he was human, and that he had a life comparable to that of other people. For the most part these artistic ambassadors were received as though they were French poodles who do clever tricks.

White America never offered these Negro writers any serious criticism. The mere fact that a Negro could write was astonishing. Nor was there any deep concern on the part of white America with the role Negro writing should play in American culture; and the role it did play grew out of accident rather than intent or design. Either it crept in through the kitchen in the form of jokes; or it was the fruits of that foul soil which was the result of a liaison between inferiority-complexed Negro 'geniuses' and burnt-out white Bohemians with money.

On the other hand, these often technically brilliant performances by Negro writers were looked upon by the majority of literate Negroes as something to be proud of. At best, Negro writing has been something external to the lives of educated Negroes themselves. That the

productions of their writers should have been something of a guide in their daily living is a matter which seems never to have been raised seriously.

Under these conditions Negro writing assumed two general aspects: 1) It became a sort of conspicuous ornamentation, the hallmark of 'achievement'. 2) It became the voice of the educated Negro pleading with white America for justice.

Rarely was the best of this writing addressed to the Negro himself, his needs, his sufferings, his aspirations. Through misdirection, Negro writers have been far better to others than they have been to themselves. And the mere recognition of this places the whole question of Negro writing in a new light and raises a doubt as to the validity of its present direction.

2   *The minority outlook*

Somewhere in his writings Lenin makes the observation that oppressed minorities often reflect the techniques of the bourgeoisie more brilliantly than some sections of the bourgeoisie themselves. The psychological importance of this becomes meaningful when it is recalled that oppressed minorities, and especially the petty bourgeois sections of oppressed minorities, strive to assimilate the virtues of the bourgeoisie in the assumption that by doing so they can lift themselves into a higher social sphere. But not only among the oppressed petty bourgeoisie does this occur. The workers of a minority people, chafing under exploitation, forge organizational forms of struggle to better their lot. Lacking the handicaps of false ambition and property, they have access to a wide social vision and a deep social consciousness. They display a greater freedom and initiative in pushing their claims upon civilization than even do the petty bourgeoisie. Their organizations show greater strength, adaptability, and efficiency than any other group or class in society.

That Negro workers, propelled by the harsh conditions of their lives, have demonstrated this consciousness and mobility for economic and political action there can be no doubt. But has this consciousness been reflected in the work of Negro writers to the same degree as it has in the Negro workers' struggle to free Herndon and the Scottsboro Boys, in the drive toward unionism, in the fight against lynching? Have they as creative writers taken advantage of their unique minority position?

The answer decidedly is *no*. Negro writers have lagged sadly, and as time passes the gap widens between them and their people.

How can this hiatus be bridged? How can the enervating effects of this long standing split be eliminated?

In presenting questions of this sort an attitude of self-consciousness and self-criticism is far more likely to be a fruitful point of departure than a mere recounting of past achievements. An emphasis upon

tendency and experiment, a view of society as something becoming rather than as something fixed and admired is the one which points the way for Negro writers to stand shoulder to shoulder with Negro workers in mood and outlook.

3 *A whole culture*

There is, however, a culture of the Negro which is his and has been addressed to him; a culture which has, for good or ill, helped to clarify his consciousness and create emotional attitudes which are conducive to action. This culture has stemmed mainly from two sources: 1) the Negro church; 2) and the folklore of the Negro people.

It was through the portals of the church that the American Negro first entered the shrine of western culture. Living under slave conditions of life, bereft of his African heritage, the Negroes' struggle for religion on the plantations between 1820-60 assumed the form of a struggle for human rights. It remained a relatively revolutionary struggle until religion began to serve as an antidote for suffering and denial. But even today there are millions of American Negroes whose only sense of a whole universe, whose only relation to society and man, and whose only guide to personal dignity comes through the archaic morphology of Christian salvation.

It was, however, in a folklore moulded out of rigorous and inhuman conditions of life that the Negro achieved his most indigenous and complete expression. Blues, spirituals, and folk tales recounted from mouth to mouth; the whispered words of a black mother to her black daughter on the ways of men; the confidential wisdom of a black father to his black son; the swapping of sex experiences on street corners from boy to boy in the deepest vernacular; work songs sung under blazing suns – all these formed the channels through which the racial wisdom flowed.

One would have thought that Negro writers in the last century of striving at expression would have continued and deepened this folk tradition, would have tried to create a more intimate and yet a more profoundly social system of artistic communication between them and their people. But the illusion that they could escape through individual achievement the harsh lot of their race swung Negro writers away from any such path. Two separate cultures sprang up: one for the Negro masses, unwritten and unrecognized; and the other for the sons and daughters of a rising Negro bourgeoisie, parasitic and mannered.

Today the question is: Shall Negro writing be for the Negro masses, moulding the lives and consciousness of those masses toward new goals, or shall it continue begging the question of the Negroes' humanity?

4   *The problem of nationalism in Negro writing*

In stressing the difference between the role Negro writing failed to play in the lives of the Negro people, and the role it should play in the future if it is to serve its historic function; in pointing out the fact that Negro writing has been addressed in the main to a small white audience rather than to a Negro one, it should be stated that no attempt is being made here to propagate a specious and blatant nationalism. Yet the nationalist character of the Negro people is unmistakable. Psychologically this nationalism is reflected in the whole of Negro culture, and especially in folklore.

In the absence of fixed and nourishing forms of culture, the Negro has a folklore which embodies the memories and hopes of his struggle for freedom. Not yet caught in paint or stone, and as yet but feebly depicted in the poem and novel, the Negroes' most powerful images of hope and despair still remain in the fluid state of daily speech. How many John Henrys have lived and died on the lips of these black people? How many mythical heroes in embryo have been allowed to perish for lack of husbanding by alert intelligence?

Negro folklore contains, in a measure that puts to shame more deliberate forms of Negro expression, the collective sense of Negro life in America. Let those who shy at the nationalist implications of Negro life look at this body of folklore, living and powerful, which rose out of a unified sense of a common life and a common fate. Here are those vital beginnings of a recognition of value in life as it is *lived*, a recognition that marks the emergence of a new culture in the shell of the old. And at the moment this process starts, at the moment when a people begin to realize a *meaning* in their suffering, the civilization that engenders that suffering is doomed.

The nationalist aspects of Negro life are as sharply manifest in the social institutions of Negro people as in folklore. There is a Negro church, a Negro press, a Negro social world, a Negro sporting world, a Negro business world, a Negro school system, Negro professions; in short, a Negro way of life in America. The Negro people did not ask for this, and deep down, though they express themselves through their institutions and adhere to this special way of life, they do not want it now. This special existence was forced upon them from without by lynch rope, bayonet and mob rule. They accepted these negative conditions with the inevitability of a tree which must live or perish in whatever soil it finds itself.

The few crumbs of American civilization which the Negro has got from the tables of capitalism have been through these segregated channels. Many Negro institutions are cowardly and incompetent. But they are all that the Negro has. And, in the main, any move, whether for progress or reaction, must come through these institutions for the simple

reason that all other channels are closed. Negro writers who seek to mould or influence the consciousness of the Negro people must address their messages to them through the ideologies and attitudes fostered in this warping way of life.

5   *The basis and meaning of nationalism in Negro writing*

The social institutions of the Negro are imprisoned in the Jim Crow political system of the South, and this Jim Crow political system is in turn built upon a plantation-feudal economy. Hence, it can be seen that the emotional expression of group-feeling which puzzles so many whites and leads them to deplore what they call 'black chauvinism' is not a morbidly inherent trait of the Negro, but rather the reflex expression of a life whose roots are imbedded deeply in Southern soil.

Negro writers must accept the nationalist implications of their lives, not in order to encourage them, but in order to change and transcend them. They must accept the concept of nationalism because, in order to transcend it, they must *possess* and *understand* it. And a nationalist spirit in Negro writing means a nationalism carrying the highest possible pitch of social consciousness. It means a nationalism that knows its origins, its limitations; that is aware of the dangers of its position; that knows its ultimate aims are unrealizable within the framework of capitalist America; a nationalism whose reason for being lies in the simple fact of self-possession and in the consciousness of the interdependence of people in modern society.

For purposes of creative expression it means that the Negro writer must realize within the area of his own personal experience those impulses which, when prefigured in terms of broad social movements, constitute the stuff of nationalism.

For Negro writers even more so than for Negro politicians, nationalism is a bewildering and vexing question, the full ramifications of which cannot be dealt with here. But among Negro workers and the Negro middle class the spirit of nationalism is rife in a hundred devious forms; and a simple literary realism which seeks to depict the lives of these people devoid of wider social connotations, devoid of the revolutionary significance of these nationalist tendencies, must of necessity do a rank injustice to the Negro people and alienate their possible allies in the struggle for freedom.

6   *Social consciousness and responsibility*

The Negro writer who seeks to function within his race as a purposeful agent has a serious responsibility. In order to do justice to his subject matter, in order to depict Negro life in all of its manifold and intricate relationships, a deep, informed, and complex consciousness is necessary; a consciousness which draws for its strength upon the fluid lore of

a great people, and moulds this lore with the concepts that move and direct the forces of history today.

With the gradual decline of the moral authority of the Negro church, and with the increasing irresolution which is paralyzing Negro middle class leadership, a new role is devolving upon the Negro writer. He is being called upon to do no less than create values by which his race is to struggle, live and die.

By his ability to fuse and make articulate the experiences of men, because his writing possesses the potential cunning to steal into the inmost recesses of the human heart, because he can create the myths and symbols that inspire a faith in life, he may expect either to be consigned to oblivion, or to be recognized for the valued agent he is.

This raises the question of the personality of the writer. It means that in the lives of Negro writers must be found those materials and experiences which will create a meaningful picture of the world today. Many young writers have grown to believe that a Marxist analysis of society presents such a picture. It creates a picture which, when placed before the eyes of the writer, should unify his personality, organize his emotions, buttress him with a tense and obdurate will to change the world.

And, in turn, this changed world will dialectically change the writer. Hence, it is through a Marxist conception of reality and society that the maximum degree of freedom in thought and feeling can be gained for the Negro writer. Further, this dramatic Marxist vision, when consciously grasped, endows the writer with a sense of dignity which no other vision can give. Ultimately, it restores to the writer his lost heritage, that is, his role as a creator of the world in which he lives, and as a creator of himself.

Yet, for the Negro writer, Marxism is but the starting point. No theory of life can take the place of life. After Marxism has laid bare the skeleton of society, there remains the task of the writer to plant flesh upon those bones out of his will to live. He may, with disgust and revulsion, say *no* and depict the horrors of capitalism encroaching upon the human being. Or he may, with hope and passion, say *yes* and depict the faint stirrings of a new and emerging life. But in whatever social voice he chooses to speak, whether positive or negative, there should always be heard or *over*-heard his faith, his necessity, his judgement.

His vision need not be simple or rendered in primer-like terms; for the life of the Negro people is not simple. The presentation of their lives should be simple, yes; but all the complexity, the strangeness, the magic wonder of life that plays like a bright sheen over the most sordid existence, should be there. To borrow a phrase from the Russians, it should have a *complex simplicity*. Eliot, Stein, Joyce, Proust, Hemingway, and Anderson; Gorky, Barbusse, Nexo, and Jack London no less than the folklore of the Negro himself should form the heritage

of the Negro writer. Every iota of gain in human thought and sensibility should be ready grist for his mill, no matter how far-fetched they may seem in their immediate implications.

7   *The problem of perspective*

What vision must Negro writers have before their eyes in order to feel the impelling necessity for an about face? What angle of vision can show them all the forces of modern society in process, all the lines of economic development converging toward a distant point of hope? Must they believe in some 'ism'?

They may feel that only dupes believe in 'isms'; they feel with some measure of justification that another commitment means only another disillusionment. But anyone destitute of a theory about the meaning, structure and direction of modern society is a lost victim in a world he cannot understand or control.

But even if Negro writers found themselves through some 'ism', how would that influence their writing? Are they being called upon to 'preach'? To be 'salesmen'? To 'prostitute' their writing? Must they 'sully' themselves? Must they write 'propaganda'?

No; it is a question of awareness, of consciousness; it is, above all, a question of perspective.

Perspective is that part of a poem, novel, or play which a writer never puts directly upon paper. It is that fixed point in intellectual space where a writer stands to view the struggles, hopes, and sufferings of his people. There are times when he may stand too close and the result is a blurred vision. Or he may stand too far away and the result is a neglect of important things.

Of all the problems faced by writers who as a whole have never allied themselves with world movements, perspective is the most difficult of achievement. At its best, perspective is a pre-conscious assumption, something which a writer takes for granted, something which he wins through his living.

A Spanish writer recently spoke of living in the heights of one's time. Surely perspective means just *that*.

It means that a Negro writer must learn to view the life of a Negro living in New York's Harlem or Chicago's South Side with the consciousness that one-sixth of the earth surface belongs to the working class. It means that a Negro writer must create in his readers' minds a relationship between a Negro woman hoeing cotton in the South and the men who loll in swivel chairs in Wall Street and take the fruits of her toil.

Perspective for Negro writers will come when they have looked and brooded so hard and so long upon the harsh lot of their race and compared it with the hopes and struggles of minority peoples everywhere that the cold facts have begun to tell them something.

8   *The problem of theme*

This does not mean that a Negro writer's sole concern must be with rendering the social scene; but if his conception of the life of his people is broad and deep enough, if the sense of the *whole* life he is seeking is vivid and strong in him, then his writing will embrace all those social, political, and economic forms under which the life of his people is manifest.

In speaking of theme one must necessarily be general and abstract; the temperament of each writer moulds and colors the world he sees. Negro life may be approached from a thousand angles, with no limit to technical and stylistic freedom.

Negro writers spring from a family, a clan, a class, and a nation; and the social units in which they are bound have a story, a record. Sense of theme will emerge in Negro writing when Negro writers try to fix this story about some pole of meaning, remembering as they do so that in the creative process meaning proceeds *equally* as much from the contemplation of the subject matter as from the hopes and apprehensions that rage in the heart of the writer.

Reduced to its simplest and most general terms, theme for Negro writers will rise from understanding the meaning of their being transplanted from a 'savage' to a 'civilized' culture in all of its social, political, economic, and emotional implications. It means that Negro writers must have in their consciousness the foreshortened picture of the *whole*, nourishing culture from which they were torn in Africa, and of the long, complex (and for the most part, unconscious) struggle to regain in some form and under alien conditions of life a *whole* culture again.

It is not only this picture they must have, but also a knowledge of the social and emotional milieu that gives it tone and solidity of detail. Theme for Negro writers will emerge when they have begun to feel the meaning of the history of their race as though they in one life time had lived it themselves throughout all the long centuries.

9   *Autonomy of craft*

For the Negro writer to depict this new reality requires a greater discipline and consciousness than was necessary for the so-called Harlem school of expression. Not only is the subject matter dealt with far more meaningful and complex, but the new role of the writer is qualitatively different. The Negro writers' new position demands a sharper definition of the status of his craft, and a sharper emphasis upon its functional autonomy.

Negro writers should seek through the medium of their craft to play as meaningful a role in the affairs of men as do other professionals. But

if their writing is demanded to perform the social office of other professions, then the autonomy of craft is lost and writing detrimentally fused with other interests. The limitations of the craft constitute some of its greatest virtues. If the sensory vehicle of imaginative writing is required to carry too great a load of didactic material, the artistic sense is submerged.

The relationship between reality and the artistic image is not always direct and simple. The imaginative conception of a historical period will not be a carbon copy of reality. Image and emotion possess a logic of their own. A vulgarized simplicity constitutes the greatest danger in tracing the reciprocal interplay between the writer and his environment.

Writing has its professional autonomy; it should complement other professions, but it should not supplant them or be swamped by them.

10 *The necessity for collective work*

It goes without saying that these things cannot be gained by Negro writers if their present mode of isolated writing and living continues. This isolation exists *among* Negro writers as well as *between* Negro and white writers. The Negro writers' lack of thorough integration with the American scene, their lack of a clear realization among themselves of their possible role, have bred generation after generation of embittered and defeated literati.

Barred for decades from the theater and publishing houses, Negro writers have been *made* to feel a sense of difference. So deep has this white-hot iron of exclusion been burnt into their hearts that thousands have all but lost the desire to become identified with American civilization. The Negro writers' acceptance of this enforced isolation and their attempt to justify it is but a defense-reflex of the whole special way of life which has been rammed down their throats.

This problem, by its very nature, is one which must be approached contemporaneously from *two* points of view. The ideological unity of Negro writers and the alliance of that unity with all the progressive ideas of our day is the primary prerequisite for collective work. On the shoulders of white writers and Negro writers alike rest the responsibility of ending this mistrust and isolation.

By placing cultural health above narrow sectional prejudices, liberal writers of all races can help to break the stony soil of aggrandizement out of which the stunted plants of Negro nationalism grew. And simultaneously Negro writers can help to weed out these choking growths of reactionary nationalism and replace them with hardier and sturdier types.

These tasks are imperative in light of the fact that we live in a time when the majority of the most basic assumptions of life can no longer be taken for granted. Tradition is no longer a guide. The world has grown huge and cold. Surely this is the moment to ask questions, to

theorize, to speculate, to wonder out of what materials can a human world be built.

Each step along this unknown path should be taken with thought, care, self-consciousness, and deliberation. When Negro writers think they have arrived at something which smacks of truth, humanity, they should want to test it with others, feel it with a degree of passion and strength that will enable them to communicate it to millions who are groping like themselves.

Writers faced with such tasks can have no possible time for malice or jealousy. The conditions for the growth of each writer depend too much upon the good work of other writers. Every first rate novel, poem, or play lifts the level of consciousness higher.

Notes on a visit to Nicaragua

The Somoza dynasty

The way from the Augusto Cesar Sandino Airport downtown reveals a city partly destroyed by the earthquake, partly by the war. On both sides of the road one finds fallen roofs and walls, silent witnesses of Somoza's rage against the Sandinistas and the local industrialists who formed with them an Opposition Front. But Coca-Cola, Siemens and other subsidiaries of global corporations have remained untouched. The Somoza dynasty left the population in poverty. The civil war left both industry and commerce in a state of bankruptcy. Commercial losses were estimated at US$220 million. Eighty per cent of industry, mostly concentrated in Managua, was destroyed. Somoza also left an illiteracy rate of 55 per cent and an unemployment-subemployment rate of 45 per cent.

Until fleeing to the US in July 1979, the Somoza family owned more than 50 per cent of the country's arable land plus 26 of the country's largest companies. Nicaragua's economy has been traditionally based on the export of five commodities: cotton, coffee, meat, sugar and gold. The principal buyer is the US. Two investors were outstanding: the Somoza family and the US transnational corporations (TNCs). Although the strategic importance of Nicaragua for the US exceeded its economic appeal and the absolute amount of US investment was low, TNCs dominated some of the dynamic sectors of the economy, e.g., food processing, agrichemicals, pharmaceuticals, gold mining, lumber

and tourism. By the end of 1978, the country's foreign debt of US$1.1 billion was 55 per cent of the GNP and one-third of it was loans from US banks. TNCs profited from Nicaraguan cheap labour, they benefited from a corrupt regime where civil liberties and workers' organisations were banned. They helped Somoza build and sustain his personal fortune. 'You just don't do business here', said a US TNC executive to *Business Week* (27 February 1978), 'without offering the General a share in it from the beginning.'

The victorious insurrection

As soon as the Sandinistas took power, they adopted a series of measures to face an emergency period which would last until 31 December 1979. Key economic sectors were nationalised and a new state autarchy took control of 51 per cent of the country's arable land. Plans for a massive literacy campaign were laid down. It is hoped that by the end of 1980 the whole population will be able to read, write and count. The university was made free of charge. Production of basic grains was to be increased. The minimum wage was brought up to 1200 cordobas (US$120) and a maximum official wage was established at 10,000 cordobas (US$1,000). Hospitals were reopened and a campaign to combat bureaucracy, corruption and opportunism was launched. A committee to coordinate the distribution of food aid was formed in the Ministry of Social Welfare. A system of yearly resignation of the cabinet was adopted so that the government can be systematically evaluated and ministers can be replaced whenever necessary. Sandinista Defence Committees were created in work places as well as in districts and villages throughout the country with multiple purposes including defence, assistance and cadre formation.

The Sandinista economic strategy

'Nicaragua traditionally served the strategic interests of and supplied cheap raw materials to the imperialist powers', says a Jesuit economist who leads the staff of the Planning Ministry.

> It is on this historical basis that we are now designing a new Sandinista economy. The former capitalist dependent economy was under direct imperialist domination. We want to break these ties of domination and create new, egalitarian relations with other peoples. The former economy was extremely centralised and selective. We want to build a new economy that is definitely popular and effectively participatory.

Such a policy implies shifting away from the pattern of imitating the 'Big Brother of the North' that for decades shaped the institutions and attitudes of Nicaragua. It implies a tremendous endeavour to reorganise urban and rural life. It implies structurally breaking the neocolonial

ties which bind Nicaragua to the world capitalist market and to the international division of labour.

It is clear to the Nicaraguan leaders that a major restructuring of the country's values and institutions can only be accomplished over time. In this perspective, the defeat of Somoza and the taking of power by the FSLN (Sandinista Front of National Liberation) was only a precondition for a gradual change in Nicaraguan society. The Sandinistas are firmly determined not to take the easy but self-defeating road of importing social models from elsewhere or of relying mainly on outside resources to rebuild their nation. They have set precise guidelines: first, economic activity will be primarily oriented to the satisfaction of the vital needs of the population. Secondly, the country's development will be planned according to its own interests as a nation and will be based foremost on the full use of its own human and material resources. Thirdly, economic activity will be based on the growing, effective participation of urban and rural workers in both the planning and the implementation of development, as well as on the sharing of the costs and benefits of development. Fourthly, development will be seen as only feasible in the context of collective self-reliance. This means reinforcing cooperation with other countries of the region and endeavouring to create the conditions for a profound restructuring of the Central American Common Market.

The plan
The economic plan for 1980 is being worked by seven teams, including government officials, experts and representatives of popular organisations, coordinated by the Ministry of Planning. The plan has four main axes: reactivation of production and organisation of supply of basic goods to the population; employment; generation of foreign exchange, and the establishment of basic services – literacy, health care and child care. Mainly concerned with the current post-war stage of the economy, it is no more than an emergency and reactivation plan. It aims to bring the economy to the pre-civil war levels of activity by an increase in GNP of 22 per cent and a reduction of unemployment-subemployment to 17-30 per cent.

Agricultural policy
Nicaragua, like most Third World countries, is mainly an agricultural economy, with large but under-utilised resources. In order to activate these, the government has made agriculture the main axis of the country's development.

The agricultural strategy is two-pronged: investment will go primarily to reactivate the production of vital agricultural goods for popular consumption. Special credits for rural development have been allocated by the nationalised banking sector. To prevent speculation in such vital

commodities as beans, currently in short supply, the state will buy all produce of the National Institute of Agrarian Reform (INRA). But the expansion and diversification of export crops, and diversification of their international markets, is also a priority. The purpose is to guarantee a sustainable inflow of foreign exchange, the surplus of which will then be channelled to the sectors producing for mass consumption, thus increasing wages, providing for new job opportunities and increasing productivity.

INRA was originally created to manage the ex-Somoza rural domains and agricultural enterprises. Gradually it has expanded its realms of activities and today is an important element in organising and educating the peasants for full participation in rural development. Confiscated land is used for state farms, ensuring employment and a stable salary to rural workers, or for cooperatives, managed by small farmers with peasant participation, or for Sandinista communes, functioning on a self-managed basis.

Industrial policy
Industrial investment is to concentrate primarily on basic manufactured products – food, clothing, medicines, construction materials, industrial and agricultural inputs and export goods. Government policy is to set up a mixed industrial structure, the main agents being the government itself and local private capital. Recently, the Consejo Superior de la Empresa Privada sent a delegation of businessmen to Washington to seek urgent foreign assistance to the industrial and commercial sectors. Local private business has been known to rely mainly on state loans for most of its working capital. 'All we want them to do', said the representative of INRA, 'is to guarantee production.' Three types of industrial property are foreseen: the 'people's property sector', mixed (government and local private) and private. Strong emphasis is given to the training of workers, through the Sandinista Workers' Federation and the Association of Peasant Workers, for the purpose of sharing responsibility in industrial and rural planning and management.

Technology and employment
In order to reduce significantly the level of unemployment during 1980 and to reach the target of full employment by the end of 1981, the government decided that the sector of agricultural production for mass consumption will operate with labour-using technology, and that special incentives will be given to industries with increased demand for labour.

Agricultural and industrial production for export, however, will use highly-intensive technology since their immediate role is to generate a maximum of foreign exchange. A nationalised foreign trade sector

will then serve as an instrument to channel the surplus to sectors producing vital goods and services.

Certain guidelines regarding foreign capital have already been established, such as to bring foreign investment to the minimum necessary, to establish its functions clearly, to diversify sources and to treat it as merely complementary to national investment. Policies for dealing with technological transfers by TNCs are still being designed, but certain measures, such as the nationalisation of vital economic sectors, were already adopted to enhance the power to negotiate with TNCs from a position of real sovereignty.

Nationalisation policy

Obviously, to put its policies into practice, the government needs to acquire the instruments and create the mechanisms which can guarantee this. Since July it has nationalised banking, foreign trade, insurance and mining production and marketing. The sector concerned with the purchase of crude oil and distribution of refined products may follow. These nationalisations allow the government to keep vital sectors in line with the economic strategy, to manage the surplus produced by those sectors and to foresee a contractual relationship with local and foreign enterprises whereby the private sector earns a profit but political power remains in the hands of the government.

Wage and fiscal policy

The government sees the prospect of a great shortage of basic goods and capital in 1980 as a challenge to Nicaraguans to activate their own resources and inventiveness. Egalitarian sharing of the costs of reactivating the economy is as important as the just distribution of the benefits. An austere wage policy was adopted, bringing the wage differential in the public sector down to a ratio of nearly 10:1, one of the lowest in the world.

Fiscal policy is another instrument for quick implementation of tactical priorities and for restructuring the profile of income distribution. Due to the emergency state of the economy after the civil war, a balanced budget approach was adopted, coupled with a relative control over the value of the currency. The government also decided not to pay the 13th wage* to the public and private salaried sectors who earn above 3000 cordobas (US$300). Those earning less than that amount are asked to offer their 13th wage to serve as unemployment compensation to the jobless fraction of the work force. Recently the government approved a 6 per cent tax on all accumulated wealth worth 100,000 cordobas (US$10,000) or more. Tax on alcohol was increased, while

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*An extra month's salary, normally paid as a bonus around Christmas time.

taxes on flour and bread were cut. The surplus, nearly 120 million cordobas, is being channelled to priority sectors such as the literacy campaign and the improvement of health services.

The long-term strategy, however, aims to reactivate and rebuild the economy in a redistributive fashion so as to decrease gradually the reliance on taxation programmes and on foreign aid and loans.

Foreign aid

Foreign aid is badly needed. The government is only interested in loans which are geared to productive investment and are easily recuperable.

Cuba has been particularly generous, in ways that witness a high spirit of solidarity and little concern for political or economic returns. But Nicaragua insists on inviting aid from other countries, so as to cover all its current needs and ensure autonomy. Social democracy has been sensitive to those needs, particularly the FRG. The Scandinavian countries and the Netherlands have been surprisingly timid and the East European countries, with few exceptions, have been insufficiently flexible.

The response of the US and of the international financial institutions has been sluggish and hesitant. Total US assistance to Nicaragua from 17 July to 30 September 1979, was a meagre US$23.5 million. Conservative congressmen have opposed the $100 million aid bill and are delaying the approval of the administration's request for three-fourths of that amount. World Bank officials, in turn, have delayed the approval of US$51 million in fresh loans to Nicaragua on the ground that the country's per capita income at US$830 is too high! While Nicaragua tries to convince the World Bank that this is a pre-civil war estimate which takes no account of the devastation caused by the war, the emergency needs of the population remain unattended. This ill will sharply contrasts with the easy approval in 1974 of World Bank and US loans to Somoza, totalling US$27 million, and the US$490 million in loans to Somoza from US private banks, which constitute a substantial fraction of the country's current debt.

The World Council of Churches and other church organisations have shown readiness and goodwill in raising funds to help Nicaragua. But much more needs to be done.

Dependence and the debt

In the long run, foreign debt is to be proportionally reduced to the necessary minimum. The government has decided not to allow the debt to go beyond US$3 billion by 1985. Of the total US$1.6 billion debt, approximately US$820 million is particularly harmful to Nicaragua because it involves high interest rates and was contracted with private banks (mostly US) and international finance organisations. The philosophy of the government is, first, to negotiate from a position of power

and, secondly, to avoid all intervention by the IMF and the World Bank. 'For years you helped a country with no credibility and no social stability', says Nicaragua to its creditors.

> This is a political more than an economic debt. It must, therefore, be negotiated in political terms. The international community is responsible for Nicaraguan reconstruction as much as it was for Nicaragua's destruction. We come to you not to ask but to demand that special conditions be created (a moratorium of 3 years on interest and of 5 years on amortisations). We are willing to pay all debt which is not linked to the purchase of weapons by Somoza and which was directly or indirectly used inside Nicaragua.

*   *   *

My overall impression as I left Nicaragua is that, in spite of the difficulties to be faced this year, the prospects are generally very favourable. The leadership is running the country on the basis of realism and an astonishing political maturity. The three tendencies within the FSLN seem today to be welded solidly together. There are no serious disagreements on strategy and the confrontations over the path of reconstruction are dealt with fraternally and tend to strengthen the unity of the Sandinistas. All seem to agree that the process of original sociopolitical transformation must develop stage by stage, with firmness and no hurry.

The Sandinista political strategy cannot be identified with the Cuban model since it insists on preserving an effective multi-party system and on developing a mixed economy based on an alliance with the local bourgeoisie. The policies of the provisional government clearly tend to favour workers and peasants. This is just one of the areas of potential (and actual) friction with the upper middle classes. The privileged sectors may react negatively to policies and to new structures which force them to share their previous wealth and power with the mass of the population. 'Moderates' may try to push for 'depoliticisation' of the army, especially if they manage to win elections. However, this is at present unlikely. All stakes favour at least another year of government of the Junta and an increasing role for the FSLN and mass organisations in government. If this happens, it is to be seen how the Sandinistas will deal with the delicate problem of the growing identity between the hegemonic party and the state – a problem which has plagued other newly-independent Third World countries with the threat of growing centralisation, bureaucratisation and authoritarianism.

The flexible and realistic Sandinista economic strategy, seeking the cooperation of the local bourgeoisie and of countries of all creeds in the reconstruction of Nicaragua, is a challenge to the private sector,

particularly to TNCs, to the highly-industrialised countries and to international organisations. Here is a country which is endeavouring to implement all the proclaimed changes leading to a New International Economic Order: its strategies aim at social and economic justice based on egalitarian values, structures and institutions, national self-reliance based on people's participation, and collective self-reliance based on cooperation with other underdeveloped countries.

Geneva   MARCOS ARRUDA
November, 1979

issues
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particularly in connection with the Constituent Assembly, to which Yusufu Bala Usman (with O. Osoba) presented a minority report. The second is the African dimension, Nigeria's African and foreign policies and the factors influencing them, with some interesting comments on the problems of decolonisation in Mozambique (which Yusufu Bala Usman visited at the time of the Independence celebrations) and Angola — societies whose achievements, values and peoples he greatly admired. The third, and in some ways the most fascinating, area of discussion is that concerned with African universities in general and Ahmadu Bello University in particular, their aims, functions and studies, the impact of the western academic world, the role of the African intelligentsia and all that: Ali Mazrui turned on his feet, so to speak.

Since the excellence of Yusufu Bala Usman lies not only in the ideas which he expresses but also in the language in which they are expressed, it may be best, instead of summarising his arguments, to anthologise him a bit and set out a few quotations, illustrating some of his main themes. (One trouble is that he is so quotable that it is difficult to choose.) For example, in his talk to the National Union of Nigerian Students on 'The State of the Nation: What State? Whose Nation?' (1977) he says:

This notion of 'the nation' consisting of a tiny class also comes out clearly in the sordid squabbling over the sale of shares of 'indigenised' companies . . . When this squabbling was going on, in the part of the country I live in, we used to hear about how important it is that 'the North' is not cheated in this allocation of shares. When you ask who exactly constitutes this 'North' which is going to benefit from the private acquisition of shares you get a nasty look and accusations of foreign ideology. Elsewhere it was 'the West', 'the Tivs', 'the Ibos', 'the Muslims', 'the Christians', 'the Majorities', 'the 'Minorities', who have to be protected from cheating. Any simple question about who actually constitutes those entities and how all of them are going to gain from some people privately acquiring shares and accumulating profits is dismissed as childish, academic or communistic . . .

In his admirable lecture on 'The Manipulation of Religion in Nigeria Today: its Social and Political Basis' (1977) Yusufu Bala Usman discusses a closely-related theme:

The intermediary bourgeois will cease to exist once the people can see clearly what his true nature is. Can anybody come out and say 'vote for me so that I can get contracts and build foreign bank accounts and houses with my foreign partners'? . . . Or, 'follow me so that I can get a big job and you can derive the satisfaction that,

Book reviews

For the Liberation of Nigeria: essays and lectures 1969-78

By YUSUFU BALA USMAN (London, New Beacon Books, 1979). 292pp. £3.45

I wish I knew Yusufu Bala Usman better. His stuff is so good: the best kind of lucid, outspoken, demystifying, vigorous, witty, radical writing. Whom among radical pamphleteers does he remind me of? Tom Paine? William Morris? Jamal al-din al-Afghani? Ho Chi Minh? Frantz Fanon? Something of all of them. He certainly belongs to that honourable and honest tradition. When I met him, several years ago at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria (where he is now Professor of History), I was impressed by the depth and range of his historical understanding (he corrected some of my errors in regard to the history of Katsina, helpfully and politely). I did not then sufficiently realise that he was also a perceptive and critical marxist, a splendid deflater of academic pomposities, a courageous opponent and analyst of the neo-colonial Nigerian state and its ruling class.

These various lectures, essays and articles, delivered and written over the past ten years, bear, naturally, the marks of the historical situation in which they were composed. This, combined with Yusufu Bala Usman's conversational way of writing, gives them an admirable freshness.

The pieces collected here are grouped in five sections, but they can be thought of more simply as falling into three main categories. The first has to do with 'the fundamental problems of Nigeria', mainly its internal problems, as they presented themselves during the 1970s,

although you do not have one square meal a day and your daughter is deformed by and dying of chronic malaria, I am eating dinner cost- ing N15.00 at Federal Palace Suite Hotel on your behalf and that of others in our tribe and religion'? Can anybody come out and say that? No! That is why this class has to obscure its true role and func- tion in our political economy ...

And here is a beautifully ironic extract from a lecture on 'Public Accountability and the Constitution' (1977). The language of the draft constitution, says Yusufu Bala Usman, is:

pompous, verbose and obscure ... It is clearly not intended for the public to understand and it is virtually untranslatable into meaning- ful prose or verse in any Nigerian language. Perhaps the only way the Nigerian public can understand it — or at least what it has in store for them — is if it is made into a television series like 'The Village Headmaster' or 'Kuliya Manta Sabo'. In this series members of the C.D.C. [Constitution Drafting Committee] ... would be the actors. They would act out the roles they have designed for themselves as chief justices, executive presidents, executive vice-presidents, presi- dentially appointed ministers from an indigenous ethnic community of one of the nineteen states, special advisers, indigenous landlords with absolute rights over thousands of acres of land, indigenous shareholders and other species of indigenous parasites and trading- post agents.

Superb.

On the problems facing Nigerian universities Yusufu Bala Usman takes on all comers in the same confident, uninhibited, exhilarating way. In 'A Critical Review of Ahmadu Bello University Public Lectures' (1970?), a nice piece, lectures by Professor James O'Connell (former Professor of Government) and Professor G.M. Walton (former Professor of English) are examined and attacked — the former as 'pseudo-academic propaganda for western policies, values and insti- tutions' and the latter as 'simply an affirmation of faith in the civilising value of English language and literature ... based on shaky arguments and shakier facts'.

It is difficult to see what we as a nation can gain from having our students spending three years in a concentrated study of the culture of a tiny segment of humanity, one, moreover, which has through 60 years of oppression left us with a lot of confusion about our dig- nity and identity. Such a study is not only useless but positively harmful ...

I am inclined to agree. Even my dear friend Joseph Ki Zerbo of Upper Volta is lambasted because he 'does not touch upon the fundamental

problems of concepts and method which arise with any serious attempt at the Africanisation of the curriculum of our educational institutions'. But the sharpest thrusts are kept, rightly of course, for the manipulative techniques of the American academic tycoons, with their familiar political-scientific tool-kit of achievement-orientation and role-specificity, their institution-to-institution linkages, their funding sources, their topping-up salary arrangements, their tailor-made programmes for faculty in-training, their insertion of senior-level American personnel into key posts in African universities in large numbers but with low visibility. 'Our colleges and universities', says John Hanna, President of Michigan State University,

> must be regarded as bastions of our defence, as essential to the preservation of our country and our way of life as supersonic bombers, nuclear-powered submarines and inter-continental ballistic missiles.

Commenting on this passage Yusufu Bala Usman sensibly says:

> The major issue confronting African universities in the 1970s is whether to ignore such statements and the facts which confirm them and go on being academic satellites of the West or to start systematically severing our ties with these educational supersonic bombers and academic submarines at all levels and establish independent universities, which can link up on a genuine Pan-African basis.

A very good and very readable book. Naturally the pieces are too short for a thorough examination of Nigeria's problems or discussion of the strategy of liberation for the Nigerian people. Never mind. It takes us a long way and gives one the true flavour of Nigerian politics. Moreover it fills one with revolutionary optimism that a person such as Yusufu Bala Usman, writing and talking with critical understanding and practical involvement, should exist. We have much to learn from him, since our predatory and oppressive ruling class is a mirror-image of his predatory and oppressive ruling class, with its 'fat foreign bank accounts, limousines, spraying champagne, polo, lace, European houses and vacations, etc., etc.', and uses similar techniques to maintain itself. We need comparable radical pamphleteers to help in the task of overthrowing it. Though Yusufu Bala Usman doesn't care much for Eng. Lit., 'Milton, thou shouldst be living at *this* hour.'

Ilmington   THOMAS HODGKIN

Big Steel: black politics and corporate power in Gary, Indiana

By EDWARD GREER (New York and London, Monthly Review Press, 1979). 287pp. £9.00

As a study in local political power, this book has a lot going for it. Gary, Indiana is the site of US Steel's major production works. The city was created out of nothing in the first decade of this century, by the Steel Corporation, not as a wholly-owned company town (indeed, this model was explicitly rejected at the time) but one where the Corporation could exercise dominant political power through the local Republican Party. In the 1930s, as a result of the New Deal and industrial unionism, substantial inroads were made into the Corporation's power and the local Republican élite gave way to a traditional (i.e., corrupt) Democratic machine. Then, in the late 1960s, Gary became the first city to elect, against the fierce (and highly racist) opposition of the local Democratic machine, a black mayor, Richard Hatcher. The scene was set for a direct confrontation between insurgent black politics and corporate power, and Edward Greer, as a special assistant in the Hatcher administration, is able to provide an insider's account of this struggle.

In fact, on the evidence presented here, the struggle never took place. Greer presents an account of the Hatcher administration's record on four issues – police reform, housing, taxation and pollution control. It was on the issue of taxation that the Hatcher administration came up against the Steel Corporation's interests most directly, given the fact that the Gary works had been massively under-assessed for local property tax purposes throughout the city's history. Yet, as Greer demonstrates, Hatcher specifically rejected a legal confrontation with US Steel on this issue, choosing instead an accommodationist strategy which left the Corporation in the position of virtually determining its own property taxes. Similarly, the Corporation was able to resist the efforts of Hatcher, backed by the federal government, to improve its pollution control measures. Even on the housing issue, where US Steel's interests were not directly involved, the Hatcher administration chose to continue with an urban renewal programme in the face of clear evidence that this would result in a substantial reduction in the housing available to the black working class.

Some police reform was achieved, in that segregated recruitment patterns were ended and the class composition of the local police altered from predominantly white lower middle class to black working class, but police practices towards the black community hardly changed at all. Rather feebly, Greer argues that:

> municipal black power has unleashed a gradual process of internal transformation of police interaction with the black community. In this process, a police force that has traditionally been used

indiscriminately in the ghetto begins to become more responsive to that community. Since the black community wants aggressive crime control, that is what it gets.

True, a black-oriented local police is unlikely to prove an effective weapon against collective black political action, but since the National Guard and the Army are always available for this purpose, it is difficult to see what significance is to be attached to this fact.

Strangely, Greer asserts in his 'theoretical' introduction and again in a very brief conclusion that his experiences in Gary have convinced him that corporate economic power in America does not translate directly into political control. He argues instead that:

> political power in the United States is in a large measure shared between competitive and monopoly capital, and that it is this sharing of power, articulated through the constitutional system, which is the specific genius of American politics. This close alignment of the petty bourgeoisie with monopoly capital in control of government and civil society, together with the virtual absence of any autonomous working-class political activity, explains contemporary American political life.

Greer claims that this position differs from that presented by both the 'pluralist' and 'power élite' theories of local politics and from a purely reductionist marxist theory of the state, and aligns himself instead with Gramsci in attempting to see how 'the hegemonic class incorporates the real interests of other classes into the state and public policy'. In fact, Greer's position has much in common with pluralism, which asserts that local politics involves a competition between different élites over specific issues, and with the 'power élite' school which always saw local capital as important in the exercise of corporate dominance over municipal politics. More importantly, Greer shares with traditional American political science a seeming inability to relate his theories to the facts, which show that in Gary at least US Steel could utilise at will its economic power to circumvent the interests of the elected black city government or of any other classes in society.

Greer concludes with a plea for a 'historical methodology' which:

> contrasts sharply with those Marxists who are engaged in elaborating a theoretical framework akin to those of the natural sciences. I would argue that it is not possible to know in advance what the balance of class forces will be by studying the structure of society. The political outcome in Gary could be determined only by actual engagement of people in battle over them.

A noble sentiment, but what one finds here is more of an engagement with bourgeois theory than with reality. On the one hand, the Hatcher

administration never entered the battle against US Steel; on the other, Greer's account consistently refuses to subject the Hatcher administration itself to anything approaching class analysis, choosing instead to excuse its powerlessness or to take comfort, as in his argument on police reform, in some notion of gradual historical transformation.

University of Birmingham   LEE BRIDGES

Africa Undermined: mining companies and the underdevelopment of Africa

By GREG LANNING with MARTI MUELLER (Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1979). 592pp. £3.50

Western mining enterprise has been central to the penetration and domination of capital in twentieth-century Africa. If anything, its importance has tended to increase in recent years. There is a large range of available sources to study mining in Africa, both academic and journalistic, as well as much work in progress. Lanning and Mueller perform a useful service in placing together between two covers much of this material. Their historical and contemporary coverage is wide, their understanding of the strategies of the mining finance houses excellent, and the numerous tables and statistical guidelines as up-to-date as possible and conveniently laid down. There is only one important subject unfortunately excluded: petroleum.

Analytically, this book functions entirely within the underdevelopment paradigm. The introduction focusses around the paradox: why is Africa so 'poor, weak and lacking in industry' when it exports more and more highly valuable minerals taken from its soil? Underdevelopment theory goes a long way to providing an answer: the control of mineral production by giant finance houses and multinational corporations competing to provide for western industrial consumption. Often they feed the minerals directly into their own furnaces and marketing systems. These companies command vast financial resources and political linkages, technical specialists and research facilities. Even the 'objective' figures which tell us the value of African mineral export production often merely reflect transfers of goods and capital within firms, sometimes doctored at that.

African governments have tried, through various techniques, especially nationalisation, to harness mineral production revenues for their own purposes. Lanning and Mueller make it clear why this offensive has so far enjoyed little success. Economic dependence on the mining houses has only increased since political independence. Even the ex-Portuguese colonies have not yet found an effective way of disengaging from the mineral enclave export trade. The limitations of

nationalisation moves by Zaire and Zambia are both detailed carefully. In general, mining companies avoid training local skilled personnel, depend on poorly-paid unskilled labour (and less and less of that as mining becomes more capital intensive), and have few linkages with the local economies that can further industrialisation. Linkages serve instead to gobble up and disorient local human and natural resources on a scale to make highly questionable the benefits accruing to African states in the form of taxes. Moreover, the demands now placed by these states on mining companies encourage many of them to disinvest or sabotage their African activities and transfer their projects to less troublesome parts of the world.

The authors show us how this happens, but the underdevelopment hypothesis on which they stand is less successful at explaining why. They themselves pose a major question which is not answered adequately: why has mining had quite a different effect in South Africa? In South Africa, to which they devote a large and interesting chunk of the book, mining wealth has buttressed industrialisation, mining interests have fallen largely under local control and, despite differences over specific policies, mining capital is closely integrated with the South African state. The authors suggest that South African exploitation of cheap labour may be the answer, but they themselves give proof that there is nothing unique in the 'massive exploitation of a non-unionised, unskilled, disenfranchised black labour force' on the continent. It is also questionable whether the structure of international capital has so altered since 1910 that political independence, also stressed as a principal difference marking out South Africa, has been unable to affect countries achieving independence since 1960 similarly. There is, finally, an odd paradox in radicals posing South Africa and the South African system as a continental model.

At this point, underdevelopment theory fails us and we have to look beneath it at the class structure and class antagonisms that lie behind capitalist development in Africa as elsewhere. Lanning and Mueller are remarkably thin on labour and it comes up only as an insertion into political economy. Their admirably wide coverage of sources sadly excludes use of important recent writing on South Africa (Legassick, Wolpe, O'Meara, etc.) which attempts to create a more profound, class-based understanding of mining and its relationship to South African capitalism. In contrast with the excellent discussions on mining capitalists, there is virtually no space given to labour unions and working-class organisations elsewhere in Africa. Yet in the black African states, class analysis and a critical understanding of the state are as fundamental as in the south to understanding the workings of capital. The conclusion suggests exactly this direction of thought and unconsciously reveals the contradictions underlying the neat equations of underdevelopment theory. Lanning and Mueller have proposed a

history of mining in Africa, but such a work still needs to be written and on a somewhat different basis than theirs. Nonetheless, their admirable and useful survey is an excellent step in the right direction.

Centre for the Study of Social History   BILL FREUND
University of Warwick

The Detainee

By LEGSON KAYIRA (London, Heinemann, 1974). 176pp. Paper 75p

To read Kayira's novel, and then to read Dr Mpakati's interview (see p. 389 of this issue) is to experience a strange feeling of *déjà vu*. *The Detainee* was first published in 1974. The small amount of publicity which the book has received only further underlines the truth that it has been very much in the interests of imperialism and its press to keep this extraordinary short novel at a very low profile indeed. For, in fictional form, the writer illustrates many of the points Mpakati is making in his interview *six years later*. The novel asserts quite clearly that the level of repression Mpakati affirms is current *now* in Malawi, was also there in 1974. We may well ask the question Mpakati asks: why doesn't the world know about it?

Napolo, the protagonist, is a peasant who lives in the newly-independent African state of 'Malamoza'. The all-powerful President of Malamoza is 'Sir Zaddock', who maintains his personal dictatorship through the use of the 'Young Brigades' of his party, who rampage up and down the countryside, stopping buses, harassing travellers like Napolo, interfering with markets and inspecting the population for party membership cards which must be regularly bought and renewed. Any dissenting or uncomprehending voice is stifled and its owner arrested and detained, or often never heard of again. The people advise each other that it is much wiser 'to let the flies settle on their tongues' and stay silent. The Young Brigades are worshippers of their master, Sir Zaddock: 'they probably think that Sir Zaddock spits skyward and then rain falls', observes one traveller, very confidentially. Sir Zaddock was away in the 'white man's country' and was recalled just before Independence: 'I told you I had come to do two things: to get rid of colonialism and to give you, my people, self government.' Now, since he has been President, he asserts, 'the so-called leaders of our conti-nent . . . are always trying to pick a quarrel with me because they don't like my realism. I'm a realist because I have nothing but the interest of you, my people, at heart.'

Napolo is travelling to the capital to see the 'white doctor' about his hernia. A peasant from a small village, with no experience beyond that – 'the only remarkable thing about him was his simplicity' – he is

flung into a social vortex that he neither knows nor understands, where all previous values and supports have been whipped from under him by the tyranny of Sir Zaddock: 'He kills like the snake so that he can eat the flies which come to feast on our decomposing bodies. I've much fear for my land. I can see that much blood will flow before things will become good again . . . Hatred has greatly increased in the land. Even the pied wagtail is deserting our villages. Whoever heard of a village without the pied wagtail?'

Napolo is eventually arrested for his misinterpreted naivety and detained with members of the political opposition to Sir Zaddock. He is removed from the detention camp on the eve of a visit there by a human rights delegation of the World Council of Churches. He and the most uncompromising opposition leaders are beaten until presumed dead and then thrown into a crocodile-infested river. Napolo's resilience and stamina allow him to survive and he manages to escape across the frontier to a neighbouring state.

The Detainee is a startling novel. Not only because of its author's high level of accomplishment of the novelist's duty – to reflect the reality of a particular place and prick the blood and set the head towards freedom – but because it speaks for all neocolonial tyrannies and their victims. Napolo emerges as a man who refuses to be intimidated or suborned through the process of his grim political education, and who on his strange journey stands fast only for the truth of his discoveries.

London   CHRIS SEARLE

In Search of Enemies: a CIA story

By JOHN STOCKWELL (New York, W.W. Norton & Co., 1978). 285pp. $4.95

This is a fascinating and important book, and one that is even more important to note at a time when the CIA is successfully re-establishing its prestige in US political discussion and recruiting the US courts to muzzle dissident employees. *In Search of Enemies* is a detailed account by the former head of the CIA Angola Task Force of the Agency's role in that country in 1975 and 1976, i.e., during the establishment of the MPLA government. Stockwell was a career officer in the CIA, with previous postings, to which he tantalisingly alludes, in Zaire, Burundi, the Ivory Coast and Vietnam. He ran the campaign in support of the FNLA of Holden Roberto and the UNITA of Jonas Savimbi from June 1975 until it petered out in 1976. He covers all dimensions of the operation – the high-level decisions in Washington, the supply of arms and money to the Angolan counter-revolutionaries and the recruitment

of mercenaries. He is precise and damning on the links between the CIA, the French and the South Africans, and he gives a graphic picture of the 'disinformation' campaign launched by the CIA, replete with fabricated tales of Cuban 'massacres'.

Stockwell traces the development of US policy through what he sees as a series of mistakes: the decision that African liberation movements would not prevail – the 'Tar Baby' position of 1969 – through the failure to foresee the Portuguese revolution of 1974 and its African consequences, down to the boomerang effect of a US destabilisation of Angola. It is in the latter point that the most important implication of the book lies: whereas Kissinger, Nixon and suchlike point to Angola as a case of an adventurist and expansionist Soviet-Cuban policy, Stockwell's account shows that it was only in response to the covert counter-revolutionary initiatives of the CIA, carried out with the full approval of Kissinger, that the Cubans intervened to support the MPLA. Stockwell also reveals that the US government had rejected a private suggestion from MPLA leader Neto that the differences between the MPLA and Washington be handled through negotiations.

Stockwell's story, none the less, has some uneasy aspects. He is rather vague about the early links, in the 1960s, between the CIA and Holden Roberto and his account of the role of the US oil companies in the Angolan war is patchy. Stockwell's own motivation remains that of a disillusioned intelligence operative – his main criticisms of the Agency are that it is corrupt and inefficient, and lies to the American people. The implication is that if it had been more efficient and honest, then he might not have broken with it. Nevertheless, we should all be glad that he did come out to tell his revelatory tale.

Transnational Institute, Amsterdam   FRED HALLIDAY

Phoenix: the decline and rebirth of the Indian people

By WILLIAM E. COFFER (KOI HOSH) (New York and London, Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1979). 281pp.

WASI'CHU: the continuing Indian wars

By BRUCE JOHANSEN and ROBERTO MAESTAS, with an introduction by JOHN REDHOUSE (New York and London, Monthly Review Press, 1979). 268pp. Cloth £8

There has long been a need for some thorough and balanced analyses of events in the recent American Indian past. Two books have now been published that go some way towards meeting this need. One of these, *Phoenix*, written by historian William Coffer (Koi Hosh) who is of Cherokee and Creek ancestry, is a fairly straightforward historical

account of Indian encounters with the state from the days of early Spanish colonialism to the late 1970s. The other, *WASI'CHU*, is far more concerned with the past few decades and uses subdivisions such as 'The subjugation system' rather than a chronological framework. This book is the result of a collaboration between a young white journalist and a New Mexican of Mexican origin who is both a journalist and leader of El Centro de la Raza.

Neither book provides new historical insights or information about early periods, but *WASI'CHU* does give an immense amount of data about the exploitation and terrorisation of Indians in recent times. The full horror of actual murders of individuals and the arbitrary seizure of land and resources is here explored more fully than has ever before been attempted in one book. It is sad that some of the impact of this appalling saga is lost by an approach and a style that seem to mute the effect. The facts are too overcrowded and lack the analysis that would put them into a coherent perspective. None the less, the facts are there and can speak very clearly for themselves. Simply to have made them all available is a valuable achievement.

Within the pages of *Phoenix*, too, the facts are often deprived of the significance which could have been imparted by a more sophisticated framework. But the first task of the historian is to select his facts and Coffer does select with acumen. His occasional ironic humour is telling: a radio producer wanted an Indian soldier to inform her about the basis of some native American songs:

> she outlined with two-syllable words and sign language that she wanted him to explain the background of his tribal songs. 'Madam,' said Sgt. Matlock in the mellifluous Oklahoma tone that is a combination of soft Southern and slow Western drawl, 'the easiest way for me to explain our Indian songs is to tell you they are similar to a series of progressions in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, and then he proceeded to quote an example from the prologue . . .

WASI'CHU's authors are too angered by the violence and deceit that still enmesh American Indians to allow room for such amusing anecdotes. They quote instead statements such as this by Richard Lundstrom:

> The reality is a continuum which connects Indian flesh sizzling over Puritan fires and Vietnamese flesh roasting under American napalm. The reality is the compulsion of a sick society to rid itself of men like Nat Turner and Crazy Horse, George Jackson and Richard Oakes, whose defiance uncovers the hypocrisy of a declaration affirming everyone's right to liberty and life. The reality is an overwhelming greed which begins with the theft of a continent and continues with the merciless looting of every country on the face of the earth which lacks the strength to defend itself.

When Coffer does cover modern events he often leaves the reader dissatisfied with his inadequate explanations for some of the more important occurrences. The tensions and issues involved in Wounded Knee, for instance, are never analysed, only described, and it would have been fascinating to have had some real insight into the precise nature of the conflict between Jack Wilson of the Oglala Sioux and Russell Means of AIM. The fact that the author admits the superficiality and confusion of his account might diminish, but does not remove, the feeling that an opportunity has been missed to replace media gossip with historical accuracy.

Overall, in dealing with affairs of the last decade, Johansen and Maestas seem to have their writing more firmly rooted in reality. While Coffer is content with an optimism that is at least myopic, if not blind, concerning the treatment of American Indians by the United States government, Johansen and Maestas recount with sombre warning the meticulous and vicious hounding of members of AIM and other radical Indian organisations by federal agencies. They are fully aware that, despite some legal gains, the native American is still cheated and oppressed as well as exploited and discriminated against. In a land where equality and self-determination are esteemed concepts, both are still denied to the Indians.

University of Keele   MARY ELLISON

Between Labour and Capital

Edited by PAT WALKER (Hassocks, Sussex, Harvester Press, 1979; Marxist Theory and Contemporary Capitalism Series, no.25). 337pp. Cloth £12.50. Paper £4.95

> By 1895 at least half of the gold mines [in South Africa] were managed by Americans and the chief engineers of both the Wernher-Beit group and Rhodes's Consolidated Gold Fields, were Americans. These engineers had not only had wide experience in the American west, Latin America and Asia, but contemporaries saw them as a 'new industrial intelligentsia, standing between capital and labour and peculiarly fitted to resolve the nation's social conflicts.'
>
> ('Lord Milner and the South African State', *History Workshop Journal*, no.8)

This observation, from a brilliant article, ought to give the authors of this book pause for thought. I quote it because I want to contrast the style of such contexted, careful examinations (and their direct political usefulness) with the depressing features of this collection.

Following Walker's useful introduction (which tries to place the

discussions in a wider context) the book consists of an essay by Barbara and John Ehrenreich 'The Professional-Managerial Class' (PMC), ten responses and a rejoinder by the Ehrenreichs.

The Ehrenreichs locate the PMC as 'salaried mental workers who do not own the means of production and whose major function in the social division of labour may be described broadly as the reproduction of capitalist culture and capitalist class relations'. They estimate the PMC in the United States to be 'something like fifty million people', with 'objectively antagonistic' relations with the working class and a history of formation 'with dramatic suddenness in the years between 1890 and 1920'. So that, in the US, they argue, there is a *'three* way polarization, between the capitalist class, the working class and a third class'. Their critics argue against their methods of analysis and/or their political conclusions (or sometimes both) from a variety of different political perspectives within the US left.

Though this is by no means a false problem, I find this kind of marxism depressing because it seems to give far greater priority to theoretical analysis (in the form of criticising earlier analyses) than to both those areas of practice which seem to me necessary for sustaining marxism as a guide to action and furthering the possibilities of overcoming racism, sexism and capitalism: namely, historical work and political work. Marx's work, or that of Lenin and Mao, can sometimes give the appearance of being mainly theoretical, but the wider historical and political context is never far away.

The PMC is not in my view a class in the way that capital and labour generate classes through the social relations of production and reproduction in specific countries. The social individuals inside the PMC are subject to just as sharp contradictions, which *pull* them towards supporting the present social arrangements or which *push* them towards resisting those arrangements, as those inside the working class. By the Ehrenreich's definition they have only their labour to sell, and, I would argue, the recent history of their unionisation and struggles points to their partial recognition of their subordinate position as workers. Within the working class as a whole there are many forms of sectionalism and fragmentation; the definitions, for example, of identity around gender, religion, location, nationality and so on, are as real problems for the making of socialism within the working class as within the PMC.

In fact, one minor theme which runs through these essays is the political problem of constructing socialism in the United States, between socialists who are often drawn from the PMC and a working class which is often very racist, chauvinist, sexist and anti-intellectual. This is a wider problem. For example, in England the gulf between the marxism of the academy and the socialism of the workplace (domestic or otherwise) is very wide *and* can be played upon by the right to further divide the socialist forces.

What this book places on the agenda, as one or two of the authors see, is the problem of alliances for socialism. But, as a matter of strategy, these alliances have to recognise differences from the start and not subordinate different groups in favour of the usual non-democratic, élitist, male vanguards *and* a range of under-labourers. In other words, the fight for this kind of united front amongst different social forces is a fight, from the very start, for the kind of socialism which will be collective, fully shared and egalitarian. It is also the best means to fight fragmentation, harassment, separation and coercion. The one thing that socialists cannot do is to base themselves upon a socialism of the PMC alone, because that would simply reproduce that division of labour (between mental and manual work) which has been so crippling in 'actually existing socialism' in the twentieth century. In fact, I would say, following Lenin and Mao's arguments for cultural revolution, that the PMC is a problem for socialism, but one which can be overcome if *they* are prepared to work in united fronts, recognising where their long objectives are, learning from the black movements, the women's movements and from working-class cultural forms of resistance. They have to learn, not teach. If this book begins to encourage that, it will have served its purpose. I fear, however, it will be used to further academic analysis without any roots in historical exploration or political practice.

Institute of Education, London   PHILIP CORRIGAN

The Puerto Rican Woman

Edited and with an Introduction by EDNA ACOSTA-BELÉN, with the collaboration of ELIA HIDALGO CHRISTENSEN (New York, Praeger, 1979). 169pp. £13

Women in Puerto Rico have a long history and a tradition of militancy and resourcefulness. The indigenous Taino Indian women fought in battle alongside men, important women were titled *casicas* (chiefs); they had power in their own right. But this came to an end with the Spanish conquest in the sixteenth century. Taino men and women were both subjected to forced labour, while the Spanish women who had come to the New World faced other forms of oppression. They were limited to a purely reproductive role, and valued only as populators of the colony. It was not until after the US invasion and occupation of Puerto Rico (1898) that women became incorporated into the labour force in any degree. In the first part of the twentieth century some outstanding working-class women became symbols of militant trade unionism, combining both trade union and feminist issues.

The collection of eleven essays reviewed here cover historical and

contemporary issues, and, through their diversity, help to give an overall view or feel of what it is like to be a Puerto Rican woman today. Although the Puerto Rican woman is better off than her Latin American sisters, she is still far from achieving a position of equality and fulfilment as a human being, as all these essays – whether based on the investigation of statistical data, on impressionistic surveys, or on the examination and analysis of cultural values and popular images – make clear.

Academically, Puerto Rican women have done well, as Acosta-Belén and Sjostrom show in their essay on educational and professional status. Proportionately, the percentage of women who reach the upper levels of schooling is higher than that of men, but there is a wide gap between their educational achievement and their actual employment. While more women than men receive degrees in business administration, for example, typically most women graduates become secretaries, while men are the managers and executives at, of course, much higher salaries.

The most original contributions in this book are those relating to the Puerto Rican woman in the US. As a result of substantial migration to the mainland during the 1930s and 1940s, there are nearly 2,000,000 Puerto Ricans in the US, and of these more than half are women. All these women suffer double discrimination as Puerto Ricans and as women, while the black women among them suffer additionally as blacks. Economically and academically deprived, they are at a great disadvantage when compared to the rest of the population. Twenty-nine per cent of the total number of Puerto Rican families in the US are headed by women. Yet, official figures show that only 12.7 per cent of these women are able to work full-time all year, compared to 80.3 per cent of white and 73.5 per cent of black female heads of households. The Puerto Rican woman in the US lives in an alien, rejecting society with few resources to help her cope with it. Lourdes Miranda King painstakingly documents the extent of discrimination against Puerto Rican women, while Angela Jorge graphically conveys what it feels like to be a black Puerto Rican woman in the US.

In the context of a country subjected to colonial exploitation, this book is invaluable in providing insight into the women's struggle for liberation and equality. Its only shortcoming is its brevity. Each of the subjects discussed here is worthy of a book on its own.

Committee for Puerto Rican Independence   ZULMA RIVERA
London

The Roots of Black Poverty: the southern plantation economy after the civil war

By JAY MANDLE (Durham, Duke University Press, 1978)

During the past decade, historians, economists and sociologists have produced numerous studies of slavery in the United States. It is not surprising that, in the wake of this outpouring of interest, there should follow a sequel, the investigation of material conditions and social arrangements after slavery was abolished to see if the situation changed significantly. Jay Mandle's *The Roots of Black Poverty* joins the ranks of those who assert that slavery merely gave way to a different form of dependent labour, emancipation marking, therefore, not a qualitative break but merely a shift of emphasis and degree.

But exactly what this agricultural system based on some sort of quasi-free labour was like and how it should be categorised is not so clear. Mandle argues that, since this labour was not able to contract freely, it was not employed according to a capitalist mode of production: equally, it was not feudal. Instead, southern labour, both during and after slavery, was determined by the plantation economy and mode of production which could be found not only in the American south, but throughout the Caribbean and Latin America in the modern period. Plantation agriculture required a low-productivity and low-wage form of labour which was controlled and allocated, not by market mechanisms, but by force and other non-economic devices, and this constituted a distinctive mode of production.

Naturally enough, this is a problematic position for a marxist, like Mandle, to take. But rather than explain precisely how this new plantation mode of production worked, what makes it different, and then relate it to marxist economic theory, he specifies merely two of the ways in which the system constrained labour, namely by erecting legal and material barriers to alternative employment off the plantation and by instituting a system of deference which was an attenuated version of the paternalism which Eugene Genovese has asserted was operative under slavery. Neither of these carries the explanation any further, but simply provides more description.

After an extended account of how dependent labourers were in the plantation economy and how minimal was the technological change possible under such a system, Professor Mandle proceeds, in the second section of the book, to offer an explanation for the demise of this economy in the 1940s and 1950s. The agent was the availability of employment in the north in the 1920s and 1930s which broke down the barriers against labour migration from the plantation, and then, as the 'pull' from outside the south intensified during and after the Second World War, the whole plantation economy collapsed. There is nothing particularly original about this explanation of the decline of cotton

tenancy or sharecropping. But what is provocative is Mandle's explanation in all of this of why blacks, who were of course the vast majority of the plantation labour, fared so poorly in the north as well. He argues that the post-plantation black experience revealed how devastatingly bad had been the preparation provided by the repressive backward plantation for blacks entering the capitalist economy of the twentieth-century north. Without property and unable to enter the northern job market until after the arrival of most white immigrants, blacks were unable to advance economically and thus the roots of their continuing poverty can be traced to their southern plantation history.

While this heritage may have contributed to the difficulties blacks underwent in the north, it cannot explain everything. After all, did not the white immigrants frequently come from backward agricultural systems, and were they not, in addition, hampered by their unfamiliarity with the language and culture? In his final chapter, the author tries to suggest that racial discrimination in the northern labour market does not account significantly for the lack of black advancement. He argues that the economic gain to the capitalist through discrimination and the lower wages that it produces is offset by the labour scarcity in areas from which blacks have been excluded that it also brings, thus suggesting that discrimination is not self-evidently an economic gain and therefore is not 'systemic' to capitalism. Thus Mandle attempts to explain away discrimination in the market-place, a strange thing for a marxist to do, and his formulation also ignores the non-economic role of discrimination, and its obvious ramifications on black social advancement. The plantation may have hindered blacks but it alone cannot explain the undiminishing persistence of black poverty and disadvantage in the north.

It is a good deal more complicated than that, and Professor Mandle has to do more than merely make assertions to the contrary. Yet, in actuality, he offers little more than an undeveloped insight into this problem through his proposal of the plantation economy model and its relation to black economic opportunity.

Charles Warren Center   MICHAEL PERMAN
Harvard University

Books received

This listing does not preclude publication of reviews

The African condition: a political diagnosis. By Ali A. Mazrui. London, Heinemann, 1980. Paper £2.95.

After the cataclysm: post war Indochina and the reconstruction of imperial ideology. By Noam Chomsky and Edward S. Herman. Boston, South End Press, 1979. Paper $5.50.

Antislavery reconsidered: new perspectives on the abolitionists. Edited by Lewis Perry and Michael Fellman. Louisiana, Louisiana State University Press. Cloth £15.75.

Asian and African systems of slavery. Edited by James L. Watson. Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1979. Cloth £9.95.

Black over white: negro political leadership in South Carolina during reconstruction. By Thomas Holt. Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 1980. Paper £3.

Black women: bringing it all back home. By Margaret Prescod-Roberts and Norma Steele. Bristol, Falling Wall Press, 1980. Paper £2.95.

Black youth, Rastafarianism and the identity crisis in Britain. By Len Garrison. London, an ACER Project Publication, 1979. Paper

Chicano scholars and writers: a bio-bibliographical directory. Edited and compiled by Julio A. Martinez. Metuchen, N.J., The Scarecrow Press, 1979. Cloth $26.50.

The counterforce syndrome: a guide to US nuclear weapons and strategic doctrine. By Robert C. Aldridge. Amsterdam, Institute for Policy Studies, 1980. Paper $3.95.

Daughters of tradition: adolescent Sikh girls and their accommodation to life in British society. By S.S. Kalra. Birmingham, Diana Balbir Publications, 1980. Paper £1.50.

The education of the future: an introduction to the theory and practice of socialist education. By Stephen Castles and Wiebke Wustenberg. London, Pluto Press, 1979. Cloth £8.50. Paper £3.95.

Essays on the theory and practice of imperialism. By D. Wadada Nabudere. London, Onyx Press, 1980. Cloth £8.50. Paper £3.50.

Ethnic power mobilized: can South Africa change? By Heribert Adam and Hermann Giliomee. Newhaven and London, Yale University Press, 1979. Cloth £14.20. Paper £3.75.

From Dessalines to Duvalier: race, colour and national independence in Haiti. By David Nicholls. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1980. Cloth £17.50.

The inheritance of inequality. By Leonard Broom, F.L. Jones, Patrick McDonell and Trevor Williams. London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980. Cloth £10.95.

The intellectuals on the road to class power: a sociological study of the role of the intelligentsia in socialism. By George Konrad and Ivan Szelenyi. Brighton, Harvester Press, 1979. Cloth £7.50.

A kind of living. By Angus Richmond. Havana, Casa de las Americas, 1978.

'Kwanim Pa: the making of the Uduk people. By Wendy James. Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1979. Cloth £15.

Lee Kuan Yew: the man, his mayoralty and his mafia. By Malcolm Caldwell. London, FUEMSSO, 1979. Paper.

Less than slaves: Jewish forced labor and the quest for compensation. By Benjamin B. Ferencz. Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1979. Cloth £9.

The multinational corporation: a radical approach. By Stephen Herbert Hymer. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1979. Cloth £17.50.

The Palestinians. By Jonathan Dimbleby. London, Quartet Books, 1979. Cloth £12.50.

Peasants and proletarians: the struggles of third world workers. Edited by Robin Cohen, Peter C.W. Gutkind and Phyllis Brazier. London, Hutchinson, 1979. Cloth £8.95.

Race and class in the southwest: a theory of racial inequality. By Mario Barrera. Notre Dame, Ind., University of Notre Dame Press, 1979. Cloth £9.80.

Race and politics: 'Bleeding Kansas' and the coming of the civil war. By James A. Rawley. Lincoln and London, University of Nebraska Press, 1980. Paper $4.95.

Race relations in colonial Trinidad 1870-1900. By Bridget Brereton. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1979. Cloth £15.

Rastaman: the Rastafarian movement in England. By Ernest Cashmore. London, George Allen & Unwin, 1979. Cloth £10.

The sociology of youth culture and youth subcultures. By Mike Brake. London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980. Cloth £8.50. Paper £3.95.

The state and revolution in Eastern Africa. By John S. Saul. London, Heinemann, 1979. Paper £3.95.

The sun betrayed: a report on the corporate seizure of US solar energy development. By Ray Reece. Boston, South End Press, 1979. Paper $5.50.

Third world women speak out. By Perdita Huston. London, Praeger, 1979. Cloth £12.75. Paper £3.75.

23rd April 1979: a report by Southall Rights. By Southall Rights. Southall Rights, 1980. Paper 80p.

Untouchable: an Indian life history. By James M. Freeman. London, George Allen & Unwin, 1979. Cloth £10.50.

White hero black beast: racism, sexism and the mask of masculinity. By Paul Hoch. London, Pluto Press, 1979. Cloth £8.95. Paper £3.95.

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